

## Out Of This World

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by [The\\_Mishamigo](#)

### Summary

When Tony starts to think that SHIELD's latest discovery is something a lot more sinister than meets the eye, he really didn't expect to find a young boy blinking up at him when he checks it out.

Or

Alien Peter's journey through life, and how love can really change a person.

### Notes

OKAY so i'm well aware ive just finished two stories that were quite long but i thought of this one and got reallly excited

AND ITS MY 100TH POST!!!!

## A Weird Beginning

Deep in rural USA, there's a small village of only fifty houses. They live close to the sea, and the only exciting thing that has happened to them before is when a single note flew into someone's back garden attached to a popped balloon. The message was only a quick gag that looked to be written by someone below the age of thirteen, but it was still astonishing for the few people that took residence there. But, other than that, it was a completely ordinary village. That was until... well, it's a long story.

There was a lady named May. She was tall and proud and had brunette hair that curved in at her jaw. She was older, as a segment of grey hair was beginning to show on the back of her head. But that's not the exciting part. She was inquisitive (unlike her husband of twenty years, who couldn't care less about the stars in the sky) and was often found sat on a deck chair just looking up. She'd say to her neighbour's oldest boy (who left the village to better his life at college, but who visited frequently with his daughter), 'I look up to remind myself I'm a part of something big, yet to know I'm one of the lucky few that's allowed to stop and watch the beauty of the world'. He never knew what it really meant, but she'd repeat it over and over again until he knew the quote off by heart.

May knew the basics of astrology... so when there was a star that looked a lot brighter than usual, she thought she might've discovered something new. And, oh, how right she was... just not in the way she believed. Sat there on her deck chair, her husband snoring away on their couch after a long shift at the village's 'police' station, she was unsure why this star was getting bigger... and bigger... and, oh wow, she wasn't so sure if this was really a star at all.

Just as she was about to head inside (just in case), there's a bang by her feet. It hit the ground hard, creating a mini crater by her peonies. When she has the courage to uncover her eyes, she sees something she never thought she'd ever see in her life. There... just by her feet, was a young man. He had small, fluffy, hair and bright brown eyes. He was only young... bless him, and all she wanted to do was take this little one in and make sure he was all okay. But as she leant down to pick him up, the boy flinched until his back hit a small statue of May's late sister she had commissioned only a year ago.

"It's okay, darling," May smiles, trying her best. She's not sure if he speaks English, but he seems to understand what she's saying by the slight tilt of his head as she puts her hand out for him to take. "I won't hurt you. Do you have a name?" she asks him. When he quickly shakes his head, she can't help but wonder where this young man came from (space, she assumes, but it's a lot to think about right now). "Hm, that's okay. How about..." she thinks of the young nephew she lost alongside her sister and brother-in-law, "Peter?"

'Peter' nods. "I-I- I'm Peter?" he asks, index finger pointed towards his chest. When May gives him a big smile, he tries to copy her but it's like he's never done that before. He bares more teeth than necessary, looking like an angler fish that's just entrapped its latest victim. It's... disconcerting, but... endearing also. "Yes, I'm Peter. I like that."

He must be about twelve? Well, that's what May thinks. He's quite a skinny little thing. Maybe that's how they all are... wherever he comes from. She wonders why he's all by himself. Was he abandoned? Alone? Did he have any family left? She had so many questions but felt like it wasn't right to dump them all on such a young mind.

"Did you come from up there?" May asks, looking up at the stars.

She keeps her head up for a while, trying to see if another shooting star might fall by her feet.

Maybe she'd find an uncle or a brother, or even a mother that's trying desperately to find her son that just fell from her grasp. Whatever happened, May can never imagine someone intentionally letting go of 'Peter' like this... he's just so sweet (so it seems, anyway).

"Yes," Peter says, "I woke up and rocks were flying everywhere. I wasn't sure where to go. My parents- I found them and they were d-dying. My people told me I had to leave, but all I wanted to do was stay by their side. They put me in this pod and- well, I ended up here. I just want to go home, but- but I don't know if I have that anymore."

As he speaks, May can't help but notice that the words don't match what he's mouthing. She looks behind his ear, focusing in on the little piece of technology that looks (quite fittingly) out of this world. "I'm sorry, sweetheart. I bet you're terrified. Would you like to come inside?" she asks, choosing to gloss over the piece of tech... maybe she'd ask later after she made sure he was okay.

"You'd allow me in your home?" Peter asks. He stays close to the statue, almost as if it's something he can use to protect himself if this interaction was to go sideways. He looks... troubled, as if the world above him wasn't as picturesque as most would assume an alien planet to be. "My mother told me that Earth wouldn't be welcoming of our kind. She said that all they'd want to do is perform tests on me. She knows... because it happened to her cousin, and they never came back."

"I won't let you anywhere near those types of people, Peter. All I see is a young boy who's scared. Someone who just lost their parents. And when that type of thing happens, you need love. No fear, or experiments. Just someone who will make you soup and tuck you in when you're feeling poorly or upset," May says, taking another timid step forward to try and show Peter everything will be okay. "That's what I find love to be, my sweetheart. And if I must be that person for you, I will try my best to be."

"...Why?" Peter questions, shaking in his boots.

It's a sight May hates to see. Whether he's come from space or from the house next door, every child deserves to be somewhere safe. She's not sure of their culture, or how life works on his planet, but she knows that on Earth... Peter was going to get the love he needed right now. And if any CIA or FBI came sniffing, she'd show them where the back door was.

"I lost a child once," she says. "He was my nephew. He had the same name I gave you. I loved him with everything I had. Every single time he'd visit, I'd have a present or two waiting him. But when he died, my heart felt empty. I've wanted my own son or daughter since. I have all this love in my heart that I want to give someone, so why not share it with the young man that literally burst into my life?" She gives him a sweet smile, offering her hand out as if Peter was a timid dog.

Peter slowly accepts it, letting his hand go from the stone to May's warm hand (that still felt hot because of the cup of tea she had been drinking... which was now on the floor). Holding onto her tight, Peter finds his legs and starts to walk gently over the wooden panels of the Parker family's porch. When the door opens, the young boy is shocked. It's nothing like his people's decorations. It's lively, colourful, and has tech that would be criminally outdated at home. Still, it's interesting and the boy from space wants to rummage through every shelf... just so he might figure out who these 'human' beings really are.

Looking at the man on the sofa, Peter comes to realise that May doesn't live on her own. He stares at the sofa-man, wondering if he was going to notice Peter's arrival. Would he rat the pre-teen alien to the authorities, or would he be as sweet as May? May's human, but she's incredibly nice. She's the opposite of what his mama told him they'd be like. Perhaps his mama was just trying to scare him, to keep him on their planet until he inevitably passed.

May must see him looking, as she holds his hand a little tighter as they walk past. She sits him down on a bed that looks to be decorated for a young boy. Her eyes glance across the room, and Peter follows it. She lands on some old drawings, and her heartbeat raises. Peter can hear it. The people from his planet are expert listeners, and they always said Peter was the best of them. They have enhanced metabolisms to humans, can jump, stick to walls, and a lot more. In fact, they're quite a bit like Earth's spiders (they share a fear of humans. Peter recalls his mother saying that the human would squash both underneath a boot if they had an opportunity to do so).

"The man on the sofa is my husband, Ben," she explains, letting go of his hand as Peter bounces on the mattress. It looks as if he's testing how comfy it is, and it's incredibly cute in May's opinion. He glances up as soon as she says Ben's name, and the fear in his eyes is obvious to see. "Ben won't hurt you, and he won't let anyone take you either. He's a lot like me, actually, just very lazy in comparison," she winks. Peter attempts to smile again, and this time he looks a lot less like a predator... and just looks happy. "You're safe here, Pete."

"...Pete? Who is *Pete*?" he asks, testing the word from his mouth.

"That's what we call a 'nickname', something where we shorten someone's name. It's just to, well- I'm not sure why we do it. It's just human culture, I guess," she smiles, realising he'll have to teach Peter a lot while he stays here. She'll have to search some stuff up later, she thinks, if she was going to become his teacher. "So, if someone calls you 'Pete', they're probably talking to you."

"Oh," Peter says, looking down at his feet. "Okay, that makes sense." He pauses, looking around the room. "Did 'Peter', your nephew, stay here when he visited your home?" he asks.

"Yes," May nods. She sighs, sitting down beside the young boy on the bed.

Even as she mourns her nephew, the memory still fresh, there's this boy here who needs her right now... so that's what she'll do. She'll never forget him, and 'Peter' isn't meant to replace him, he's just a reminder of all that love he gave her... and something she thinks of when life gets her down to push her in the right direction.

Peter doesn't know how to reply. But as he goes to speak, he feels a pair of eyes on his translator. Looking up at what might be his new guardian, he sees May's concern/inquisition light up on her face. "My papa gave it to me on my tenth birthday. My home planet isn't the only place with life on it out there. And the people know each other quite well. But- languages are hard. So, I have this universe-wide translator that tells me what people are saying as they speak. It automatically translates what I say too."

"That's incredible," May says. She looks a little closer, but when Peter looks terrified underneath her gaze... she backs off. She never wants him to think she's using him for all of his tech. "But... if you're going to live here, we'll have to find a way of hiding you in plain sight. I don't want the wrong people out there looking for you. So... maybe I can teach you how to speak English? With that big mind of yours... I imagine it won't be a hardship."

Peter's never been one to throw away an opportunity to learn. His eyes go wide, his whole-body buzzes with excitement and he wants to start the process *now*. If he's as good at English as he was at 'Glorgan' (that planet was the best, but that's a whole different story), then he'll be fluent by the end of the year. May sees his excitement, chucking underneath her breath.

"Right then, it's decided," May smiles. "We'll start in the morning. For now... how about you go to sleep? I'll be next door if you need anything." She pats him on his head, ruffling his messy head of hair as he practises his smile once more. He jumps up, startling May, and curls up on the ceiling. Maybe that's how they sleep on his planet, but it's not what they do here. "Sweetheart? Do you

want me to show a comfier way? Only if you'd like."

A few minutes later, Peter's tucked up in the bed with the covers looking comically large as he tries to figure out the configuration of everything. He seems happy, however, and he doesn't miss the ceiling at all which makes May glad. She doesn't to take everything that makes him... him away from the young boy. If he wants to sleep on the ceiling, he can, he just needs to understand what humans do... just in case. It keeps him safe, and that's all she wants. Because after only twenty minutes, she's come to feel a sense of protectiveness over the pre-teen, and a love she feels will last forever. And if he's the young boy to make him a mother, then- well, she's looking forward to the rest of her life with her family.

### *The next morning*

Peter wakes up in a cloud. Wait, no- it's not a cloud. What did May call it? She said it was a bed, he thinks (that's not what they called them on his planet). He sits up, looking across the room. There's a book of science, of magic- and a thing called 'Lego' that Peter thinks looks very entertaining. He walks over as if by a lure and picks up a thesis written by someone whom he doesn't recognise the name. But as he waits for May to wake up, he reads. And he reads. And by the time there's a knock on the door, he's finished the whole thing and is a lot smarter (in Earth's knowledge) than he was the day before.

"Hello," Peter says, head in the book. He puts it down when she walks in. It's important to be polite, apparently. That's Earth's customs, and he knows it's wise to abide by them. If he didn't... then surely people would notice, and he'll be the next victim from space to be poked at (he really didn't want that). "Do humans really think we look like this? It's grossly offensive if you ask me. I've only seen one green 'alien' before and that's when he accidentally fell in some paint that mama left out."

May chuckles. She takes the book from the young boy's grasp, putting a bookmark in the edges as she sets it down on the bedside table. "Unfortunately, my dear. But that's just what our kind is like. We're a very inquisitive bunch, but... well, we get a lot of things wrong."

"Yeah, that's true," Peter mumbles. He gets up from the bed, biting his bottom lip.

He knows this May is trustworthy, but he has not met her husband. That was the itinerary for today, she said, but he's not sure if he's ready yet. It's a big jump. He only got here about ten hours ago... and if he's honest, he wanted to keep his visit to Earth short. He hadn't intended to end up here. Every terrestrial being he's ever met has told him to 'stay clear of Earth', or 'those human beings try and control the things they don't know'. As a young boy, Peter was always scared of their horror stories... but it didn't seem *too* bad. So, maybe he'll stay for a while.

"Ben's not working today, but he's gone for a walk with our dog. When he gets back, would you like to meet him? If you're not comfortable with him knowing, we could always say that you're one of my friend's kids," May asks, as she grabs a handful of old clothes that her late nephew used to wear on top of the bed sheets.

"I don't think that'll work," Peter sighs. He looks over at his book, "I've learnt a lot about your people in the last few minutes. And stubborn is a word I'd use for most of the people they speak about." Looking at his feet, he wonders if other Peter would mind an alien wearing his clothes. Maybe they'd find it cool... "Anyway," he says, interrupting his own thoughts. "He'd ask too many questions, and we'd get tangled up in it- and it's a lot, May. I'd rather he just knew. If he was to report me, I'd have the most time to escape."

"Peter," May sighs sadly. "He won't tell anyone."

And, as predicted, Ben's more than excited to greet their new guest. His mind is over filling with questions. How many habitable planets are there? How can you breathe our air? Your English... it's brilliant... how?

May wants to ask Ben where all this interest was coming from, as he'd never usually sit and watch the stars with her when she asked. But, if she's being honest, even the person with the least amount of interest of what's up there would want to ask a living, breathing, alien about their backstory. However, once Ben sees the broken look on the kid's face... all he wants to do is nurse him back to health and let him know there's people (or aliens, in this case) that care for him.

They take him over to the small market that's located twenty minutes down the road. Peter hides his face with his hood, even though it would be impossible to distinguish anything by his face alone. He looks human... there's just things that make him different from the rest of the species. Things that are easy to hide. Ben looks over at May, who's taking in every minute of 'motherhood'. She holds Peter's hand to make sure he's safe, and the kid grins in return. He's happy, and that's all that either of them wants.

Buying him all sorts of important things, Peter's taken back by the compassion these humans show. It's an honour to have fallen into the garden of two people with golden hearts. They're what Peter thinks of as 'good', and he knows he'll have a good life on Earth with these two by his side. His mama told him, as she died in his arms, that he'll be safe. Wherever the pod takes him, he'll be okay. It's what she told him to reassure him, but maybe she needed to hear it herself too.

Wherever she may be, May wants to hold her close and tell her that 'Pete's' safe with her, no matter what. She'd fight until she had nothing left if it kept Peter away from the hands of those with greed travelling through their veins. And, as a new 'mother' of sorts, the Parker family (plus their new addition) go through life without a single hiccup. It's as if nobody noticed the boy who fell.

That is... until...

*Two years later*

Getting used to human life has been exhausting. But Peter thinks he gets it now. It's fun, if not a little draining. But meeting other kind people like May keeps him going, even if they don't know the secret he's hiding.

He's fluent in English. The translator his papa gave him is locked away in a safe. Ben had put it there himself, worried that Peter would lose it somewhere. There's no need for it anymore. Peter could talk just as good as the next guy, only flipping into his native language when stressed. Nobody realises... they just think it's gibberish. A few people find him weird because of his little quirk, but they don't expect anything extra-terrestrial.

School isn't something he'd ever thought about attending. But he's amazing at it. After falsifying his own birth certificate, considering he wasn't a citizen anywhere on this planet, he convinced Ben and May to let him attend Midtown (he felt under-challenged. All the books May brought him taught him nothing but facts. Which was good, but he wanted more. He wanted to debate. Discuss. Everything. and then he read about 'school'... and he was hooked). Midtown was the biggest school in the area, which happened to be a forty-minute drive every morning. It's worth it, though, when Peter comes running through the door with a backpack resting over his shoulder as he grins (he perfected that smile, and May never gets tired of seeing it).

He has a best friend, and a girl that makes him feel all bubbly inside. Ned's the only human that Peter trusted as soon as they met. The other kid saw the 'new boy' and ran over him to introduce

himself. They sat and spoke about Lego together. The little, plastic, bricks had become a hobby of Peter's after he saw a packet of them on his first day. Almost like fate, Ned had brought Peter's favourite set into school to build it. Just like that- a relationship written in the stars was made.

There's no doubt in Ned's eyes that his best friend was human... but we all make mistakes sometimes. Peter does think about telling him one day. He trusts Ned. Ned wouldn't give him up. It's just- he doesn't want to ruin anything. What if someone he can't trust overhears them speaking? He tries to calm down, but his heart drops. And tears start to fall.

"I wish I was born a human," Peter mumbles against Ben's chest, melting into his 'dad's' grip as soon as he steps in from work. "I just want to be like you two. I wish I could walk around school without worrying that someone will rat me out to the Government."

"You're safe, Peter," Ben whispers, running a hand through his hair. He hums a nursery song from Earth into his ear, and it really works. It calms Peter down in seconds. "That's it. Can you say it with me?" he asks. They make eye-contact, and Peter nods. "I'm safe," Ben says, at the same time as young Peter (who's now a *teenager*, by the way. May's been wondering for weeks if alien puberty is different to that in a human body) mumbles "I'm safe," underneath his breath.

Peter jumps into his bed that evening, feeling weird. People on his planet have a super sense. They're able to sense something before it happens. A long, long, time before it does... in some cases. Peter's mama said he was extra strong. He could sense things *months* before they happened, which was the record for their people. His mama was proud, but- he can't even remember what her voice sounded like as she congratulated him. It stings, but he knows she wants him to keep going... so he does.

The sad thing, however, is his life is completely chaperoned. They can't risk Peter wondering out into the street. As much as Ben tells his kid that he's safe, they both know he's not. May's been reading on the news that some SHEILD agents have traced an outgoing signal in space over two years ago. They're getting closer, and how can she fulfil her promise to Peter's mama? She's not strong enough to let Peter go, be it by force or voluntarily. And she's not strong enough to fight back. She'll go kicking and screaming, but she knows that if they want Pete... they'll take him. No obstacle is big enough.

But for now, May takes Peter out onto the porch. They watch the stars together, as her young boy tells her about every single star. He recognises one as the neighbouring planet to his own. But when he sees the empty space where his home should be, he retreats in on himself and stops speaking.

"They're always with you, Pete," she tells him, putting their joint hands over his heart. "Death isn't the end. Well, I'd like to believe so anyway. Even if the ones we love are gone, we can remember them in our hearts. I know it hurts, but it'll get better. For now, lets just have some soup and watch a funny movie. How does that sound?"

"That sounds great," Peter responds. He lets May carry him in, both dropping down on the sofa.

Although it may look like a happy ending for now... there's much more to come. Peter Parker's life is never smooth-sailing, especially when he happens to come from space, so- he's waiting for it. And if his sense is correct (which it always is)... it's all coming soon.

# Something's Up

## Chapter Notes

TW at the end!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Fresh, cold, air filters in through the askew window. Peter looks out at it, smiling. Another day on earth. He thought about going back home. He really did. But... he loved May and Ben. They were like parents to him, and he didn't want to lose that.

Throwing his legs to the side of the bed, the young alien gets out and glances at his reflection. He's older now. His hair is longer and if he looks *really* closely, there's a bit of hair sprouting out of his chin. One hair's enough to call it a beard, right?

Sighing as he throws on his clothes, he grabs his school bag and throws it over his shoulder. Midtown's far away from where they live, so he must wake up really early to jump on the bus. If May would let him swing like he used to do at home... well, he'd have an extra twenty minutes in bed for sure. But apparently it's too 'dangerous'. And, even if he hasn't seen the evil his mama told him about, May assures him people don't like what they can't understand. So... he sticks to his routine... as mundane as it is.

His favourite part of the route is when it finally completes all the winding back roads, pulling up in front of his best friend's house. Ned comes running out of the door with his family close behind him. He looks embarrassed, sure, but Peter thinks it's sweet. His mother truly cares for him, if only he'd look and see.

Ned walks down the aisle to the seats that Peter always saves. Peter jumps up because Ned always likes the window seat. They sit together, catching up on their evening (or weekend), and fill the bus with a laughter that pretty much everyone complains about. But it's their routine. It's what Peter, as he becomes more human by the day, loves, so... when it changes, he doesn't know what to do.

The first sense that something is wrong is when the bus stops at Ned's house... but nobody comes out. The doors quickly close, and Peter's mundane routine is damaged. It's changed, and the young boy doesn't know what to do. There's never been a day where Ned wasn't there... by his side. Staring out at the world, the window turns blurry and his mind spaces out. Why is he here? *Where* is he? He takes a deep breath, and then- everything is fine?

Peter runs a stressed hand over his face, a deep sigh escaping from his lips. The sounds of Earth rotate in and out of his mind, and there's sweat everywhere. The hair on top of his arms is raised, and he tries so, so, hard to calm himself down but there's alarms going off in his mind to tell him... run. Run as fast as you can, Peter, don't let them catch you. But- he doesn't move, he stays. Because May and Ben told him to stay in the shadows, it's best not to stand out. Let the other people around you be the sun, for all you need to do (to stay safe) is exist.

Dreaming of doing extraordinary things is long out of reach, because he's different- and if people realise that he is, he'll become the scum of the earth. Something to stare at. People will marvel at him as they parade him around in a transparent cage. A circus act... that's what he'll become. But



there's no cheering, no happy faces telling him he's doing a great job... all he'll see is fear. He will hear cries of outrage. 'Where did he come from', or 'how'... but most of all they'll say, 'how can we tear him down? 'Make him feel like he doesn't belong'. And that? He knows he's not ready for it.

The bus stops in front of his school gates. Mechanic doors swing open, and Peter slowly walks down the aisle of the bus with his backpack glued to him. He glances around for Ned. Maybe his best friend was early- maybe he'll be standing by their lockers with that contagious grin. Then, and only then, Peter will feel safe. For a good friend is like a shield, someone who can make you feel like you're safe with a simple glance. And that's what he needs right now... that's all he needs.

But Ned isn't there. Instead of Ned, Peter's warmth, Flash Thompson is standing with his arms crossed over his chest. His back is leant against Peter's locker, his head resting on the cold metal. He looks... intimidating. Peter's seen worse, however. Because life on his home planet was different. Frankly, he remembers curling up on the ceiling as his body completely shakes as his mama tries her hardest to keep others out. She never could, and Peter's learnt how to protect others from such a young age because of it. If he wanted to, Flash would never hurt him again... but then he remembers May's voice. 'Stay in the shadows, Peter'. And then he remembers what he's been taught. 'Revenge is lost on those like you, my son. Use what you have inside for good. If there are those out there who don't like that, you walk on with your head held high. Because you... you are so good.'

"Excuse me," Peter says, politely, as he tries to walk around Flash. The boy doesn't move. So, Peter tries again. "I need to get my books, please."

"Why are you talking to me?" Flash asks, only his eyes moving over to where Peter stands only an inch smaller than him. His body stays where it is. "If you want your books, you can wait until I'm finished here. Can't you see I'm busy?"

Peter looks around. He still can't quite grasp human nature. "Uh... no? No, I can't," he says. Because there is nobody there. It's just Flash. Therefore, unless he has some complicated stuff going on in his mind... he's not busy, and he could easily step out of the way for Peter to open his locker. God, Peter thinks, humans are certainly complicated.

Flash huffs, glaring at Peter as somebody beside them stifles a laugh. He doesn't seem happy. He never does around Peter. Peter has never said anything bad to him (well, he doesn't think so anyway), but the other boy decided he disliked him the second they walked through the doors. And it's not because he's an alien, right? Because nobody knows about that.

"Can I just get to my books?" Peter says again, after an awkward minute passes.

"Fine," Flash grumbles. He moves around, waiting for Peter to open his locker. When he does, and gets his books out, the bully hits them and laughs as they all tumble to the ground. Paper goes flying, and the teenager winces as the hardcover smacks into his toes. "There you go. Happy now?" Flash laughs, running away from the carnage before the principal sees what he's done.

Peter looks around at the mess, confusion overwhelming him. Why did Flash have to do this to him? After taking a breather, before a panic could rise in his chest and overtake him, he kneels to start clearing everything up. There are footprints over his notes, trodden on by classmates who didn't care to help (he doesn't need them, really, he's got a photographic memory- but he likes to keep up appearances). Reaching for his favourite book that May brought him for his birthday last year (the hitchhikers guide to the galaxy, he likes it because it's strangely accurate), he doesn't feel the comforting feel of the paper... but instead he finds himself gripping onto a hand.

“Sorry!” he says, quickly looking up and retracting his hand as if he just touched a hot iron. When he realises who was trying to help, his heartbeat only accelerates. “Michelle- I,” he starts, gulping when she gives him a look (it’s MJ, he can feel her say). “MJ, I mean- sorry- I didn’t mean to-,” he stops himself, as she slowly hands him the book. “Thank you.”

MJ doesn’t say ‘you’re welcome’, or ‘it’s okay’. All she does is look off in the direction that Flash went as they gather the rest of the books. When they’ve got everything together, she looks at Peter and offers a timid smile which isn’t usually there. It fades in a second, replaced by her natural frown- but to know that he was the person behind even a second of her happiness makes Peter feel... overwhelmed. “He’s an ass,” she finally says. When Peter tilts his head, confused, she elaborates. “Flash. He’s- well, he shouldn’t have done that to you.”

“It’s okay. I’m used to it. I don’t know why he’s so insistent on doing it to me- but I- I guess I understand,” Peter looks to his feet. “I don’t think his father is so nice to him if I’m honest. If he feels better by making me feel worse... I don’t mind! Honestly!”

MJ purses her lips (Peter thinks back to the book he read about human behaviour... that means she doesn’t approve of something. He bites his lip. Oh no, that doesn’t sound good. What did he say to annoy her?). She sighs. “You should mind,” she says. But then... she has this peculiar grin on her face. “I think I know your secret, Parker.”

Peter’s brain short circuits. He’s been so careful, hasn’t he? Was this what his senses were warning him off this morning? If MJ knew, she’d tell people. Right? He’d be at risk, and there’s nothing he could do that would stop it. This is bad... really bad. “Uh, you do?” he asks, his hands beginning to shake (he’s lucky the books stop her from seeing).

MJ hums, tucking her hair behind her ear. “You’re not human, are you?”

Peter’s eyes bulge out of his face. “I am! I swear-,”

“Peter,” MJ laughs softly. “I was joking. I mean- I don’t care that you are nice or anything, but I swear you’re too kind to be one of us. So- yeah- hah,” she awkwardly smiles (and she’s making a lot of eye-contact... didn’t that website say that meant she was interested?). “Anyway! I gotta go- you know, class and everything,” she says, waving as she walks away... as if she had no control over where her feet took her.

That was a close one, Peter thinks, as he runs off to his own class that he was about to be late for. Good thing she didn’t actually know. But... then again... wouldn’t it be nice if he could talk to someone about his problems? Ned wouldn’t mind... surely. In fact, he *loves* space, so he’d be over the moon! But Ben prohibits it... yet, what does he know? Sure, both his ‘parents’ here on Earth love him and want the best for him. However, they act like being himself would be a crime. If he wanted to go out and swing across the nearest city’s buildings... he could! It’s his birth right.

Shutting that thought to the back of his mind, Peter pushes the door open to his class and sneaks in... just in time. He eyes the clock. As he gets all his stuff out, the threshold passes. He would’ve been late if he just waited two more minutes. And if he was late to yet another class, his teachers warned him that he’d get a detention. And if he got detention, he’d get the late bus which doesn’t go all the way home. It stops just outside their village. So, even if May and Ben didn’t like it, he’d have to walk home... on his own. Which ‘apparently’ is too dangerous.

School’s so boring without Ned, Peter decides. The day drags, as if he was sat by the window watching one raindrop fall from the top to the bottom. He sits on their table by himself, picking at his sandwich he doesn’t want to eat. Whenever he sees something amusing happen, he looks over to see if Ned saw it too... but his best friend isn’t there. He’d give anything for him to be here,

giving him hope that humanity isn't as bad as the adults in his life say it is.

The bell goes, but Peter's too distracted to remember what it means. He only notices everyone's gone when the janitor gently taps him on the shoulder, looking at him if he's crazy for just staring at the white walls of the cafeteria. Peter quickly springs into action, scaring the man who just woke him up from whatever far away place he was stuck in. He throws his food in the bin, grabs his bag, and goes to his fifth period. But... he doesn't make it in time. The teacher's waiting for him with a disappointed gaze and a shake of the head, as if they knew it was going to happen.

Flash laughs when he sits down, happy that the person he hates so much is down. Peter hates this lesson if he's honest. It's not the content. Oh, he can't hate anything that teaches him so much about his new home... but it's because he sits in front of Flash. Which means he must sit there and endure crumbled up pieces of paper smacking him on the head, or little whispers only he can hear attacking everything about him. He gets through it, of course, but it's never 'fun'.

He stays behind in class, as of his teacher's request. "What's happening, Peter? You've been late to a lot of classes recently. We're beginning to worry about you."

Peter tilts his head. Compassion, he realises. He'd like to say he was taught that on his home planet, but it was only because of the parenting book (one he found in May's draw one night) that he learnt about it. And he also realised that a lot of people lacked it. And only those who really cared for others showed Peter how it worked. On paper, it sounded so good. In reality? It was so much better.

Knowing someone was there, someone who (to be honest) hardly knew anything about him, made his heart feel warm. It made him feel good. And it was another pro for humanity. They sound less evil as the days go by. Maybe walking home tonight wouldn't be as scary as he once thought.

"I'm fine," Peter says, and he thinks that he's telling the truth. "Just feel like something bad is going to happen today."

"Something bad?" his teacher, Mr Smith, questions, gesturing to the open seat for Peter to take. "And why do you feel like that? Is something happening at home?"

"Oh, no. Nothing at home," Peter responds. "No, it's just- well, it's nothing. I can't really explain it."

His teacher smiles at him softly, putting him at ease. "Sometimes we just get a bad feeling, don't we?" they ask, nodding when Peter does. "If it makes you feel any better, I think everything is going to be... just fine."

Peter furrows his eyebrows. Hm, well- that last bit sounded a bit sinister. But this teacher had always been weird. Ned said they started only a few days before he did, and that they've always been a bit weird. And Peter swears they follow him and Ned around a lot, especially when getting the bus home. But surely that's all in his head... right?

"How about I give you a ride home after your detention today? It worries me that you're on your own... especially since Ned isn't here to witness- I mean- to keep you safe," they smile.

Peter doesn't think anything of the kind offer. But he must say no. That's just what he's been told to do. "Oh, that's okay. Thank you. I think I'll get home just fine."

Peter's dismissed... but he swears he hears his teacher say 'oh, I don't think you will', as he closes his door. Hm, it must just be his imagination.

Peter walks the halls, the sense of danger building. It's always been there at school, and he's never known why, but today- today it's on a whole different level. He gets to his last class of the day, passes the slip that his last teacher wrote for him over the desk, and sits down. He looks around, feeling as if somebody is watching him. He must just be going delirious because he misses Ned. That's surely it. He's just out of his routine and once he gets home to May's mediocre pasta, everything will be fine. Ben will finish his shift in the station, give them both a kiss on the cheek, and go to bed. May will then take him out to the porch, and they'll look at the stars together and laugh at the crater Peter made when he first landed (they haven't bothered to fix it).

Yes, Peter thinks, everything will be... fine.

Detention's boring. He sits at the back of the class, watching a video of someone they call 'Captain Rogers'. He preaches listening to the rules, but Peter doesn't bother to take it in. It's not like he completely disregards everything here. He's a good student. He does his work; he even attends academic decathlon on days where Ben can pick him up. He just stares into space sometimes and misses the first five minutes of a lesson. Big deal! He personally thinks the schools wants too much out of them.

Looking at the back of the class, he makes eye-contact with MJ who was previously doodling in her sketch book. She keeps her eyes on him for a second, before turning to the boy who has his head in his hands and a frown on his face (she's always liked to draw people in distress. Even if Peter doesn't get it, it's her hobby... and he thinks she's pretty good at it). He can't remember her getting detention. Sometimes he worries that she's got more going on at home than she let out, but then he remembers he doesn't know *anything* about her. So, he hasn't really got a leg to stand on. She could have the best family life... for all he knows. It's best to stay out of other people's business when you're someone like Peter (yet another life lesson he got from the people who took him in). He wouldn't want to risk putting her in danger too.

Detention stops, and Peter's mind fades away from MJ and focuses in on how he's getting home. He jumps onto the bus, bag tight in his hand, and sits on the same seats he always does. The bus leaves, dropping him off in the outskirts of town. It's a thirty-ish- minute walk from here to home. Ben has always told him to call if he's in this situation, but surely he'll be just fine to make his own way back.

But when he checks his phone to see if Ned's said anything (he's a good student, he turns his phone off throughout the day), he's bombarded by messages from Ben asking him where he is. Peter gets he's worried, but all he wants to do is live a normal life like humans of his age do. So, he doesn't reply. He walks and walks... until he sees someone familiar walking behind a young lady... just a little bit too close.

"Hey!" Peter calls, when he notices the knife. He runs, fast. He knows how to save people's lives. He's seen his mama do it, and he's been taught the technique since the moment he could walk. This... this should be easy. "Leave her alone!"

In the dimly lit hallway, the man turns around. He's tall, with black hair and a tattoo that looks like a skull and bones on the top of his arm. But it's the face that baffles Peter. It's... it's Mr Smith from his school, the same teacher who asked him if he was okay only a few hours back.

"Peter!" he smiles, "They said you would fall for the trap, but I wasn't too sure of it myself," the man chuckles. He leans over, kissing the lady (the same lady Peter once thought to be in danger) on the cheek. "Thanks for the help, sweetheart," he smiles, putting a twenty-dollar bill in her hand as she walks off... the sounds of heels getting drastically lower. "Damaged by humans who tell you that the world is amazing, and that everyone deserves to be here. New flash, they're wrong. Not

everyone deserves to be on our planet, son, especially those like you.”

“...M-Mr Smith, what do you mean?” Peter stutters.

“I mean, *Peter*, that I’m not letting you out on our streets ever again. You are property of Shield now- well, you’re really Hydra’s... but we’ll have to find a new location once we’re strong enough again. If the higher ups of shield find out, we’re doomed.” He’s talking to himself, but he’s looking straight into Peter’s eyes. It’s terrifying.

“Mr Smith, I don’t- I don’t understand what you’re saying.”

“Get it through your thick head, kid! I’m not ‘Mr Smith’! I was sent by my team to keep an eye out on you. We knew you arrived since the second you landed in May Parker’s Garden. She took you... kept you hidden from us with her brother-in-law’s tech. I had to keep up this ‘cover’ of a teacher as we needed the right time to strike. No witnesses, nobody to say I was acting weird,” his teacher (well, Peter realises he was never his teacher at all) grins, stepping forward. “My name’s Brock, kid. Brock Rumlow. And you? You’re coming with me. And I’m not asking twice.”

Peter jumps back, heart in his stomach. “No, I’m not. I’m not going anywhere near you.” He goes to turn around, but there’s more of people like ‘Brock’ standing there. Peter looks up, trying to figure out a plan of escape. But as he goes to jump up, hands grabbing the side of the wall so he can retreat to the roof... a dart hits him in the leg. His vision goes dark.

It doesn’t keep him under for long. In fact, it’s only five minutes later when the young boy comes to again. And when he does, he wishes he never did. He blinks. Looking up, he watches as Brock Rumlow puts his hand around Uncle Ben’s neck. The man must’ve located him on ‘find my friends’, as Peter was never home this late. And when he found people trying to take his kid away... he would’ve done anything to stop it. But he can’t win against them. And when Peter hears the gunshot go off, he knows what has happened. Ben’s dying, and it’s all his fault.

“Ben!” Peter screams, trying to get to his dad of two years. “Ben, no- please. Please. Help him! God, somebody help! I’ll go with you- just please- please help him.” The kid’s crying, as Brock rolls him over to where Ben’s bleeding out on the floor.

“It’s too late,” the man sneers, “Say your goodbyes.”

Peter rests his forehead against Ben’s. “I’m so sorry,” he whispers, his own tears dripping down onto Ben as he sobs hysterically. “I love you, Ben. I’m so sorry.”

He leans into Ben’s touch as the man uses his last few minutes to hold Peter’s cheek in his palm. “I love you too, Petey-Pie. I promise you that you’ll make it out of this, bubba. There’s still good out there, remember that. And one day- you have to make it back to her- okay? Be good, kid. Or should I say- stay good... because you’ve always been the best.”

Peter sobs as the hand drops, indicating that Ben’s gone... and he’s not coming back. He’s dead. He’s been killed so these men can take Peter away and tear him down. And when he’s pulled away from his dad, he’s hit with another dart. But he’s glad for the darkness to overtake him, and a bit of him wishes he never came out of it.

*Thirty minutes later*

Officer Grant walks around the corner of his post, looking for Ben Parker (his partner-in-crime... or in this case, his partner-in-law of ten years). May called him to say neither him or their adopted kid, Peter, made their way home... and she was worried beyond belief. He called out Ben’s name

for ages, getting no reply. It was a small, yet populated, town (unlike the nearby village that the Parker's called home), so they couldn't have gone far. But when he sees a trail of blood... his heart stops. He follows it and sees... Ben.

Turning around to throw up at the sight, officer Grant can hardly believe his eyes. He calls the rest of the team, getting them to block the area off for the public. And once they arrive, and mourn, he jumps into his car with the horrible task of letting May know her husband was dead, and her son was nowhere to be found. Her entire family was gone... How on earth would she ever get over it?

He knocks on the door, twice. And as he raises his first to go for the third knock, the door swings open. May's standing there in a dressing gown and tired eyes. She looks behind Officer Grant, hoping to see her family standing there beside him... but there's nothing to see. When they make eye-contact, she knows. And just like that, she collapses into tears and lands in Ben's partner's arms.

"Oh my god," she cries.

Later that night, once the officer's gone, she sits in the living room. Her love for astrology breaks in half, because now... she thinks, what's the point of watching them? Because the world isn't as beautiful as she once thought it to be. The stars remind her of greed, or evil- of humans who can't leave things alone. It reminds her of lost love- as she remembers every evening where Peter would point out where he's been. So, as she sits on the sofa that her husband loved so much, she fades away from the person she used to be. And she cries. She now realises what she should've told her boy the moment he stepped foot on her earth.

'Run away, Peter', she wishes she said, because all humans do is destroy... and now, now they've destroyed her... and they're coming for her kid next. And there's nothing she can do to stop it.

## Chapter End Notes

TW- Gun violence and death

# Go Lapdog

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Why?” Peter screams, his entire body detained with machines he doesn’t know the name of. It feels as if he’s being pulled apart from every angle, as if there was one person by each limb. Pulling, and pulling, until there’s nothing left of him, and he simply falls apart. “Let me out! Please, I just want to go home. You killed my dad- please!” he cries, thrashing around to try and break free but they have it so tight.

He can’t breathe. It’s as if they’ve placed an anchor on his chest, and they’re pushing him down into the water. There’s nothing to get him out. No speeches about how good the world is, or how he’s protected by his mother and father. There’s no warmth here, at all. He’s freezing. And now all he wants is to fall asleep and never wake up again. Because then, at least, they won’t get as much from him as they please. But, as he’s learnt now, the world’s unrelenting and when you beg for something... only the lucky few end up happy.

“Why- why are you doing this to me?” He manages to say, before someone dressed head to toe in PPE saunters over to the machine that he’s in and throws a device over his mouth to stop him from talking. He mumbles underneath the new restraint, but it’s impossible for them to hear. So, he gives up. And he waits.

He waits for hours, held up by restraints that make him cry in agony. Until the door is thrown open and the man from the alleyway comes out. He looks proud of himself. And when looks behind him, he seems to cower in fear at (presumably) his boss. Humans tend to do that. When they have power, they’ll act like a big shot. They think they’re the king of the jungle. But as soon as somebody walks in and shows that, no, they are the ones in charge... they’ll submit and look up to them. They’ll do their every bidding. Peter thinks it’s pathetic, but- it’s just a pattern he’s noticed- and one he doesn’t really want to analyse right now. Not here.

“Now- look at this,” The boss man (the real boss) grins, running his hand over the casing of the machine. He chuckles. “You really did it, Rumlow. I’ll be honest... I didn’t think you had it in you. I’m impressed.”

It’s not a compliment Peter would be jumping for joy by. Honestly, it’s a little backhanded. But Rumlow takes the praise like a young child, who’s only goal is to impress. To show off. He smiles to himself, glancing over at Peter as if to say, ‘I did that, look at me- I’m the one who got this for you’. And Peter would say ‘you caught me at a bad time’. Because, really, he could’ve taken them all out. But he doesn’t want to. He never wanted to hurt anybody with his gift, no matter what they did or who they turned out to be. He just wanted to make a difference, when he could, but now that’s impossible. And it makes Peter (the fourteen-year-old alien kid) wish that he did more when he could.

“Thank you, sir,” Rumlow whispers, but it’s long forgotten when Peter looks into the eyes of his commander.

Dark, evil, eyes. Peter’s never seen anything like them. The way they explore the trap, grinning without the need of the man’s lips. There’s more of his pupil than the pigment, but- if Peter can see properly- he thinks they’d be blue. His hair flops on top of his head like there’s no effort. He’s got out of his tomb for the day, underneath the fraud that he’s normal. Like he’s the average Joe who lives in a white picket house, with 2.5 kids and a golden retriever. His wife’s name would be

'Sally', and they'd argue every fortnight whenever he'd spend too much time with his old friends.

He's old, Peter realises. He can tell by the wrinkles that line his face, each one adding to the fear Peter feels. Because he's old, it means he has experience. And he's too old to be doing the dirty work himself, but at the right age to reap the benefits of work that people do below him. Now, people know aliens exist. They've met Thor. But they don't have a form of transport to visit those planets, or perhaps even more there. If Peter can show them how, well- it would be amazing. Peter can see in these eyes that Pierce be the one to claim all the fame and fortune that comes with a discovery like it.

"Alexander Pierce," the man smiles (Peter's not sure if he's introducing himself, or if they've got the wrong alien. He thinks it might be the latter). But, no- it's not a smile. It's more of a leer. Because Peter's sure this person has never sincerely smiled in their life, and this- this little meeting they have going on here would not be the first. Not in a long shot. "It's nice to meet you, Peter. I've been looking forward to this for a long time."

"I can't say I share the same sentiment, sir," Peter says, as soon as the device that kept his mouth shut drops. Apparently, the commander 'Pierce' is interested in what he has to say.

"Oh, so polite. And your English is impeccable... especially as it's your... hm, well- let's say it's not your native tongue. Who taught you that?" Pierce chuckles. "Oh, wait. You don't have to tell me. It was your lovely Aunt. What was her name again? May? What a lovely name, Peter. A lovely lady too, I presume. It would be such a shame if... if she got caught up in this. Wouldn't it?"

Peter's sight goes red, and he doesn't know what to do. He tries to move in his restraints. "Don't you dare touch her. You've already killed my dad. He was innocent. You didn't have to... why did you do that? You could've knocked him out. You could've just let him go. But-,"

"Life's not all about making friends, or family, Pete. You'll learn that with the proper teachings. I'll make sure you understand the real world. And it is a shame about Ben. I do apologise. I guess I just have trigger friendly employees, you must know how it goes. However, I assure you that May will be left alone. As long as you do what you're told."

Pierce presses a button on the side of the machine. The doors open, and Peter falls out. He's bounded by specially made handcuffs, meaning there's no way for him to break free and run. But as he stands there, completely vulnerable in front of the small crowd of people, he doesn't know what to do. He stays quiet. Because he won't be the reason that May dies. He's already killed Ben, and he knows he'll never fully comprehend that fact. So, he decides to just do what they say (for now), because if he's hurt... well, it's much better than the alternative.

Rumlow walks him down the hallway, the higher-ups of their group stalking close behind. Turning into a bright, white, room, Peter's thrown to the floor. The door shuts after him, the sound of the lock turning making his stomach churn with dread. He shouldn't be here. Mama sent him to safety, told him to go to a planet where he'd be okay. He should've never picked Earth.

People like to pretend they're better than they are. They've damaged the world in which they live, to the point of fires destroying their land. To huge earthquakes decimating land, destroying the lives (typically the lives of those who don't deserve it, comeuppance like that never comes to people like Pierce) of cities. They've released so much pollution that it's hard to breathe. And yet, they continue to live the same. They don't care. And if they hurt thousands of others during their rampage, so be it. And Peter? Peter's part of the thousands. He's not seen as a living thing, but he's just a barrier they need to cross to expand. He knows all they want to do is invade, to take over planets like Peter's home. And if they do, they'd destroy them too.



Peter thinks he's met the extent of good in humanity. May, Ben, Ned, and MJ... they made his time on Earth worthwhile. But the rest of the population seems to be cruel, at least from what he's experienced. So, as he sits in the room- caged up like a zoo animal (he wonders if they'll make him perform tricks, as people stare at him through the glass), he resigns to his fate and lets his head rest on the floor. This is his new home... he might as well get used to it.

There's banging on the only glass window into the room. It makes Peter flinch, the sounds in his head overwhelming from the super hearing he was born with. Looking up, he realises the group haven't left. They're just looking... waiting to see if he'll react.

"Peter, this is no time for sleep," Pierce chuckles darkly. "I want you to tell us how you got here, and how we might find your home. Just for a little visit, of course."

"My home planet is gone. That's why I came here," Peter says, eyes closing as he remembers.

*Two years... (and a bit) ago*

Peter's home planet was gorgeous. There's vegetation as far as the eye can see, houses woven into the environment. There are no cars on the concrete road (although, Peter hadn't heard of that machine before he came to Earth... so it's not something he took notice of). People swing down the street, cheers of joy filling the air. Everyone's happy, living in their bubble.

Sure, if you look deeper, there's crime and darkness everywhere. In each little crevice, there's more to see than meets the eye. On paper, his planet was everything. But the reality was damning. Peter was afraid every time he went to sleep that he'd wake up and nobody would be there. But still. It was better than Earth. Because at least he's not trapped in a room that feels like it's getting smaller and smaller by the minute.

But then the invasion happened. Beings from a neighbouring planet came in on ships that were far too advanced for his people to take out. They had weapons that people wouldn't even comprehend, but the invaders... well, they had more. And as the planet was torn to shreds, they made sure that every last being was destroyed. But his parents (Richard and Mary) put him in a pod and launched him into space. They must've done something to wipe a bit of his memory, because he wasn't sure of his real name, or how it felt when they died in his arms. He knows that they did, but it's like the memory is hidden behind bars... parts of it escaping only for it to be pushed back inside once he realises.

He remembers the dust after the explosions went off. It was everywhere. And as he looked around, he saw those he loved on the floor. They were crying out for help, but he couldn't do anything. He was trapped in this escape pod, forced to leave when all he wanted to do was be the hero. And that's probably why he didn't realise where he was going, ending up on the one planet that was worse than his own.

*Back in present time*

"Focus, Pete. You've got that far off look in your eyes, I don't like it," Pierce says, banging on the glass once more. It kicks Peter out of his memory he was so deep inside. "Now, where were we? Oh, yes. Tell me where you're from and how you got here, I won't ask again."

"It's gone," Peter repeats. "My planet... it's gone."

"I don't care, you stupid kid. Boohoo, things like that happen. There's more out there than just your home, isn't there? I'll find it, don't get me wrong- but that's not what I just asked you... is it? *How did you get here?!* Don't make me go and find May."

“I-I-“ Peter stutters, “I don’t know. Please, just believe me. I have no idea.” He’s telling the truth, he really doesn’t understand how she planned it. He doesn’t know how to get back, either. So, really, they have the wrong alien. “My mama- she- she did it. I fell asleep and then I was here. I swear.”

Pierce takes a deep breath, shaking his head. He leans over to Rumlow, mumbling something, before he turns and walks away. Peter thinks that it must be over then, but he couldn’t be prepared for what came next. The doors open, and Rumlow (who Peter’s affectionately nicknamed ‘lap dog’ in his head) waltzes in. He takes Peter’s handcuffs off, putting a collar on instead. Quickly running out, closing the door again before Peter can escape, he has that same evil leer on his face as his boss did. Just as Peter was trying to figure out what was happening, a sharp shock came from the collar.

And the pain that follows that, it’s immense. It happens for hours. Over and over, he’s shocked by this stupid collar. He feels as if he’s going to pass out from the pain, but they give it just enough time for his super healing to help- and then they shock him again.

“If you don’t tell us, Peter, this is going to become a routine for you,” Rumlow says, pressing the button one more time before leaving (also reminding Peter that Pierce was right... his employees really were sadistic assholes who are trigger happy). “Have fun, kiddo.”

As the agent walks away, remote still tight in his hand, Peter lets a tear escape. He couldn’t believe that this man had been watching him all this time, waiting for the perfect opportunity to grab him, and run intrusive tests... just in the sake of power. And what hurts a lot, is he really thought his ‘teacher’ cared for him... But people like him don’t have the space in their hearts to care, and they never will.

In the corner of the room, there’s a TV. It’s playing the news, but it’s barely loud enough to hear. But Peter’s different. He can hear it just fine. On the screen at the moment, he recognises the group of Earth’s defenders as ‘The Avengers’. Powerful, influential, people who use their gifts for good. However, Peter’s not sure if they are. Because they work for SHIELD, and the badge of Pierce’s jacket is of the same company. And if they’re working amongst people like that... then how good can they be? Yet, if they are as good as they say they are... Peter almost dreams that they’d bust through these white walls and save him.

They’d get what it’s like to be him. They’re all different, swaying from the norm that the humans take to. Powers beyond belief, ones that scare the ordinary. He stares- and hopes. In his dreams, his prayers, he whispers to whoever’s listening... ‘Please, just help me. I don’t deserve any of this. I just want to live’. He’d like to think somebody heard.

Just as he dreams, he hears a clatter behind him. And as he looks up, he sees... a worried face that he thinks he should recognise. Red and gold- a suit so familiar. Was he just looking at it? But the face just glides past him, not seeing the young boy imprisoned by his co-workers.

Trying to listen to their conversation, he only gets little bits.

“Hey Rumlow,” Steve Rogers says, Tony Stark standing just behind him. “I’ve just come to inform you when our next mission is.” They look at each with harsh glances, and it’s clear they don’t really get along. Maybe the two heroes know the type of person lap dog is... and they might be aware that kidnapping is something he’s capable of. “You know- if we need you.”

They have no idea, Peter thinks. He tries to climb up the walls, but he slips. He hasn’t used his powers in so long... he’s become rusty. He cries out in agony, hoping that they’d hear. That they’d notice him and save him. As he screams, he’s shocked again. He’s shocked- this time until he

passes out and he cannot cry anymore.

And when he wakes up... his heroes were gone.

And instead, he sees the devil in the form of a man. Because he's not in the same room anymore. He's strapped to a chair, and people in lab coats are walking around him and injecting him with needles, taking his blood- and doing so many tests that Peter doesn't even know what they're trying to look for.

"You're doing so well, Peter," Pierce smiles, "We're going to learn so much from you. You'll be a hero, trust me. A hero! People won't be afraid of you, son. They'll thank you for all that you've done."

Peter shakes his head, "No, you're a monster. Nobody will ever look up to you, sir. You're the scum of the Earth, and you're the reason why so many live in fea-,"

Peter's rant is stopped by a slap to the face. It stings, and Peter sits there as a tear falls down his face (much to the delight of Pierce). The man leans down, resting his elbow on the side of the chair. "Don't ever speak to me like that again," he whispers. "Or I promise, things will get a lot worse for you. Do you understand?" he asks, but Peter's silent. So, Pierce leans back and slaps him again. Harder. "Do you understand, Peter?!" he says, shouting so loud that it makes everyone in the room stop what they're doing.

"Yes," Peter nods, trying not to show that he's weak in any way.

"Yes... what? Use your manners."

"Yes, sir," Peter whispers.

"There we go. Good boy," Pierce smiles. He looks over at the nearest scientist to his left, "Hurry up. Get these tests done. We don't have all night, do we?"

The tests go on for hours. They're little lab experiment hurts- it makes Peter feel like he's going to pass out (or worse). But if he could- if he could just close his eyes- then he wouldn't see the whites of their eyes- the way they don't even have a hint of remorse. They don't shake when they pull his arm, injecting God knows what into his blood stream. It's terrifying. It's worse than the tyrants that destroyed his home. Because they told people of their evils, letting it be known what they could do. These people? They could be normal. They could walk past you in a shop. They could be your neighbour, your friend. Hiding in the shadows to attack, to hide, it's scarier.

For the next week, this routine happens over and over again. He's taken from the room he's come to see as his new home, forced up into the 'chair'. They test things. They hurt him. They induce pain just to see how he'll react. Maybe they think they can take this power and develop it into something to make them stronger, to enhance a new group of humans. Because ultimately, finding a way to be better than everyone else is their goal.

He becomes weak. But... there's times when he's beaten so much that it makes him want to fight back. At the bottom of the pit that they've thrown him into, he knows that eventually he can get himself out. Before he knows it, he'll be back with May, and they can mourn Ben together and look at the stars... and everything will be just fine. It will be, he knows it. Why else did he feel such a pulling from this planet to stay?

*Meanwhile*

After that weird encounter with Rumlow, a man named Tony Stark wonders down to his lab and

he... he thinks. He's always thought there was something off with his college, something deeper than being 'unique'. The way he had people crowded around that room, and how he could've sworn he heard crying.

Born and bred on Earth, Tony Stark's no alien. But he knows a bit about being different. A super mind, and a super suit, the man knows too much about the Earth's flaws... and people like Brock Rumlow tend to find their way into his life without him asking.

Tony's not a saint. No, he's far from it. So, he doesn't feel bad about hacking into Shield's confidential files to try and get a peek of that division's 'secret project' he's heard whispers of. Getting into Fury's account, he's surprised to see that the director doesn't have access to Pierce's work. Hm, he wonders, now- that's just made him even more intrigued.

If he just so happens to 'have a question' for them... What are they going to do if he sees what they're up to? Unless they have some kind of atomic bomb in there, it's not like he'll tattle. He's been known to keep things to himself. In fact, he's a very trustful person (Rhodey would disagree... but it's not like he knows *everything* about Tony... right?).

He'll sleep on it, he thinks. Well, he won't. He can't sleep that well lately. Nightmares and all. Steve, and the rest of the team, have been trying their hardest to get him some help... but he doesn't see the point of it. He'll get better. He just has to give it some time. Because that's always worked for him in the past...

Walking up to the kitchen to try and distract his mind from the pit of worry in his stomach (was he really worried about Rumlow was doing? Fury wouldn't let SHIELD do anything that bad...), he sees someone else there. He wasn't expecting that. He thought it was late at night... or early morning at least.

"Tony?" Steve says. He's wearing his running gear. Has he taken up running in the night now? What is the time anyway? He checks his watch. Shit, it was 8am. And he hadn't slept. "Tony," Steve repeats, sadly.

"Oh, don't look so sad Captain."

"Why haven't you slept?"

Tony bites his lip, trying to think of an excuse. "I have something to attend to."

Steve's hand covers Tony's wrist. "We're worried about you," he says.

"We'? What, do you speak for the whole team now?" Tony asks, trying to pull his arm out of Steve's ridiculous super soldier grip. "Look, I need to check something out. Superhero stuff. You know the drill. It's important."

"And so are you," Steve interjects.

"Steve, I think... I think Rumlow and Pierce are... well, didn't you hear something suspicious when we were there?" He asks, completely glossing over the man's worry.

"Now that you mention it...", Steve says. "You think they're hiding something?"

"I'm certain of it," Tony says. And if it means he can also get out of this awkward conversation, he'd go be the knight in shining armour to whatever they've got locked up in that room. He'll show Steve that he's just fine, thank you, and that he's more than capable of helping. And if he can beat Rumlow as he does it... well, it's always a bonus. He never has liked that man anyway. He's

always so sure of himself, it drives Tony crazy.

Walking away from Steve as fast as he can, Tony finds himself in an area of the building he never goes to by himself. His slight worry turns into something much worse when he gets close to the door and... he hears utter terror from the other side. Blasting the door open with his suit, his eyes go wide at the sight. He never would've guessed this was the origin of his worry at all.

Because there... there in a chair surrounded by a bunch of people in lab coats was a kid. A scared, bleeding, and terrified kid who looked at Tony as if he was saved. And, suddenly, that's all the billionaire wanted to do.

## Chapter End Notes

I hope you like it !! Feel like it's not as good:/ i'll blame it on the freshers flu

## I Need A Hero

In life, Tony's been called many things. Unfair, stubborn, cruel, and even a murder. But nobody really knows who he is underneath it all. When all the bandages come off, and the real person can be seen from underneath...he's kind, funny, scared, and fair. And he certainly knows that seeing a bloody, young, and crying teenager stuck in a room with a collar around their neck... well, 'ethical' isn't the word that springs into his mind. In fact, he'll say that it's disgusting. How he doesn't throw up as soon as he lays his eyes on him... he'll never know.

Every pair of eyes in the room are on him, waiting for him to make his next move. He's not sure what on earth to do. He's seen atrocities in his life, but none of them have ever been so close to his home- to his work. He's working with people who feel as if this, whatever it is, is okay.

"You all better step aside, or-," Tony says, coldly. His mouth moves by itself, as he speaks without his mind even thinking. "Well, you don't want to find out."

The scientists walk away, leaving a clear line to the room for Tony to step towards. All he can see is a little boy's head through the one window, his eyes so wide and red from crying that Tony would've thought he had an infection. He's shaking from head to toe like a leaf, and Tony knows- he feels- that it's his job to make sure he's okay. The automatic pull he feels to this little one is scary, but he'll help him in any way that he can.

"Hey, buddy. I'm just opening the doors, okay? I'll be with you in a second," Tony announces, hacking into the system they've used to operate the doors. They slowly open, and Tony sighs as the boy tries to back away. He's terrified, so Tony steps out of the suit to show him he's not a scary robot (Tony doesn't know that Peter finds the human a lot scarier). "I don't know if you know who I am-,"

"I-Iron man?" Peter whispers, eyes flickering up to the TV. "I saw you on the news."

"That's right," Tony smiles, "And I promise you, I won't hurt you."

Peter doesn't seem to believe him. His eyes are wide as he stares, unblinking, at the sign on Tony's arm. On his under suit, which was designed by one of the 'costume' interns that Fury hired (that's the only part of his uniform that they'll get to touch... which is why he likes having the suits), there is a logo, one Peter wishes he never saw before. It's shield's. That must mean he's working with them, and this is all a ruse, and-

"Hey, hey- look," Tony says, covering the logo with his hand. "I'm not like them, buddy. Nothing like them at all. You don't have to trust me, but I can get you out of here. Okay? And once we're in a safe place, I'll take this stupid thing off and you'll never have to see it again." He kneels to the ground, "What's your name, sweetheart?" he asks, trying a different approach that might show the kid that everything's just fine.

"Peter," Peter whispers.

"Oh, lovely. That's a very nice name, Peter," Tony says, "My real name isn't Iron Man. My name's Tony," he smiles. "And I have a lot of friends who have just as nice names, who'd like to help you as much as I would."

Peter tilts his head to the side like an inquisitive puppy. Scared, but still brave, he takes a few steps forward and finds himself almost melting into Tony's side. He feels the man freeze up, but as soon

as he's by his feet he feels safe- and he's not going anywhere. And when Tony caves in, wrapping himself protectively over the kid as he stands up (Peter still holding on), everything comes together and feels so good.

"Let's take this stupid thing off you," Tony tells him, reaching up. It's a simple design (probably made by Hammer tech or something like that) and falls apart with one button. It's off to the ground and far away from Peter's neck. Just like it should be. The flesh underneath where it had just been is damaged, and he knows they should go to a hospital to check on it- but the kid's still trembling, and it would be cruel to keep him away from somewhere homely. They'd go later. "There we are, all better," Tony smiles.

"I want to get out of here," Peter whispers.

"Same, kiddo," Tony says, turning them around. He slowly makes the kid detach from him, after a lot of convincing, just so he can step back in the suit. Once he's in it, he carefully sweeps Peter of his feet and gets prepared to carry him down the hallway. But before all of that, he destroys this place. He destroys their research. And he makes sure that these workers are taken away by higher authority. Because what they've done... it's disgusting. He doesn't even bother to check it over.

Peter's in Tony's arms when they get back to his penthouse. Nobody else is there. It's just them in this huge building. Peter's never seen anything like this before. Everything is huge. Every corner has a feature piece, or art that doesn't make sense, and there's more money here than he's ever seen before. He can't keep his eyes off it. It looks like it hasn't been touched in years. He knows he'll mess it up. Is that why Tony brought him here? To test him? If so, he knows he'll fail. He'll be back in that place in no time and his saviour will be a forgotten memory.

Tony takes him over to a living room, letting him sit on the clouds- no, sorry- they're sofa's. Peter gets confused... especially when they're both from the same material. These things are so soft that he could float away and find himself in the middle of the sky. They have fluffy pillows of them too, outlined in fake fur. It feels like an animal to the touch, maybe something like a cute dog- or, well, you catch the drift.

Tony's not in the under suit anymore, as promised. Instead, he's wearing an old band shirt with a pair of grey joggers underneath. It makes him look a bit like Ben... which puts Peter in a weird state for a second. But once Tony starts speaking, he blinks, and everything is back to normal. Ben's not there, staring sadly at him... it's just Tony.

"Pepper picked them," Tony says, catching Peter stroking the edge of the pillow. The boy looks upset, or guilty, so he immediately retracts his hand. But Tony just chuckles, moving his hand back where it came from. "They barely get the attention they deserve, it's okay if you want to touch them. I used to do it all the time. Guess the lure of it just got lost on me," he smiles. "Anyway- Pete! Is there anyone I can get in contact with to get you home?"

Peter's eyes go wide. "No, no- can't go home," he says. "It will put her in danger."

"Who's in danger, kid?" Tony asks, slowly scooting over so the pillow is the only thing in between them. He puts his hand over where he's stroking the fur, squeezing it gently like he's seen Barton do when he's with his kids. He can be fatherly... what's stopping him? You know, apart from the tragic background with a far away father who didn't give a shit about him, therefore never teaching him how to properly love the people around him. No, that definitely wasn't stopping him at all. "Pete?" he asks again when the room is silent for just a bit too long.

"...D-Do you promise that you're not one of them?" Peter asks, "Because they do know who she is and where- but you look more powerful and if you go over there- she'll be dead before I know it

and I won't be able to stop it and it will be all my fault," he rants, hand shaking so much it makes Tony start moving back and forth.

"I promise," he says, putting his hand over his own heart. "With all of my heart," he smiles, making Peter feel safe, "That I am not anything to do with them. We might be under the same company, but their work isn't overseen by me- and I had no clue they had you in there. If I did? Oh, you would've been rescued the second they brought you here."

"...They killed my dad. Well, he wasn't actually my dad, but he was the closest thing I had to one and they- they just shot him in front of me. They left him to bleed out as they drugged me," Peter admits, staring at his feet. "And they'll go after my mom next. Her name's May and she- she can't protect herself, Tony. They'll kill her," Peter whimpers.

"They won't," Tony interrupts, a fierce look on his face. "Peter, they're not going to be free men once I go anywhere near them. What they did to you... kid, it's so wrong. I promise you that I will keep May safe, okay? We'll get her in a safe house if we have to," he says, and he sounds so stern that he must be telling the truth. Peter takes a deep breath, finding himself more and more comfortable as he sinks into the sofa. Tony keeps talking as he tries to throw away the new memories he made in that room. "Evil assholes- thinking they have the right to keep you locked up like that. They had *no* right... why did they even need an innocent little kid? I hate these weirdos that like to test on humans and animals... it's so weird," Tony rants. He moves his hand away from the kid's, using it to check up on the scarring. That's weird... it's mostly gone?

"I...I must be honest with you," Peter says slowly. "I am not human. That's why they- it's... it's the reason they took me in."

"...Okay?" he says, raising his eyebrow. "So... you're going to have to elaborate on that one."

"I.I come from a different planet?" he says, "I know you have a friend like that. Thor? They said he was from Asgard and said that if he was less powerful than...than they would've done this to him. They wanted information from me, to try and crack intergalactic travel. But I-I don't even know how I got here. I came here two years ago- and it was parents who did it. Our planet was destroyed, and I was the only survivor. All of my friends and family died, and then I was happy here because I found a lovely couple who took me in and now Ben's dead and it's all my fault-," Peter knows he's ranting, he knows he should stop and take a break but it's been such a long week and saying it out loud helps him to understand it all- and it looks as if Tony wants to know. "I just- I felt loved with them, and then- then it's all gone like that. People are cruel, Tony. Sorry. I know you are one, but you're good- but most of them- they're all evil."

"I won't argue with you on that one, bud," Tony sighs. He looks into the boy's eyes and all he sees is... damage. He's broken. There's been so much loss, so much misery, in his life that he's hanging on by a thread. One more thing could be the end of it all, so he decides he'll be the one to help build it up again. Tony's quick to accept the fact that Peter's an alien. In fact, he's one of the only people in the world that's good for this situation. He's besties with an alien. Like Peter said, he knows Thor. So, he's seen it all and finding out this kid he rescued is from outer space? Well, it's not crazy. "So, you're an alien? They've seen a lot of others like you, so I'm struggling to figure out why they thought it would be a good idea to steal you of the streets. Honestly, they're assholes. But they don't represent the rest of us. Humans are a lot nicer than I imagine you've seen, and I'll make sure to show you that."

Peter smiles to himself a little. "So... it's a bit like you're a spokesperson... for people?"

Tony chuckles, "A bit like that, yeah."



“...I’m not so sure if I believe you yet,” Peter says. “But I know you’re good. You’re like Ben and May. I can trust you.”

Tony’s breath hitches. Peter’s so sure that this will be okay, and it makes Tony’s heart swell with pride. He’s made this kid comfortable. He’s made sure that he’s safe, and he’s the one who will get him back home after this without a single scratch on his back (well, no more than they’ve already gave him).

Tony takes Peter to a spare bedroom that night, tucking him in. He feels like a good father, something he has always feared. And as he lingers by the switch, hand on it as he waits for Peter to settle down... he can’t help but smile at the way he watches Tony. There’s admiration in his stare, all of him wondering how he got so lucky that someone cared, that someone was willing to walk in and save him. Because if he hadn’t, Peter wasn’t sure how much longer he would’ve gone in that horrible room.

“Night, night, Pete. I’ll be here in the morning. And if you need anything, you ask FRIDAY. She’s in the ceiling, okay?” He smiles. Going to press the switch, he stops when Peter just looks at him as if he’s gone crazy. “Pete?”

“In the ceiling? What do you mean?”

“Have you ever heard of an AI?” Tony chuckles, mainly at the boy’s face (not at his perfectly reasonable question).

“Yes, I have,” he says. His mouth turns into a big ‘O’ as he puts two and two together before Tony can explain it. “Friday’s an AI?” Tony nods as Peter finishes his question. “Awesome,” he whispers. “Friday?” he says, directing his attention to the ceiling.

“Yes, Peter?” the robotic voice says, resonating out of the speaks across the room.

“May you turn the lights off for me? It will save Tony having to perform such an extraneous task,” he says, giggling to himself at the look of shock on Tony’s face. He hears the man laugh as the room turns black, but then the doors shut and he’s all by himself.

It’s too dark, he thinks, as he lies there. Peter doesn’t bother to try and fall asleep, because he knows what he’ll get as soon as he closes his eyes. The memories will come flooding back, a harsh reminder of all the shit he’s been through recently. And then he’ll thrash about and scream underneath the covers, and Tony will walk in and tell him to leave. He’ll roll his eyes, telling him there’s no reason for him to act like this and then-

“Peter?” the robotic voice says, “Your heart rate has elevated. Should I contact Sir for you?”

Peter quickly shakes his head, “No, no, he’s done too much for me already. I wouldn’t want to put him out. It’s okay. I’ll be fine.”

“May I offer you some techniques Sir uses whenever he finds it hard to sleep because of nightmares?”

*Oh*, Peter thinks. Tony gets nightmares too. Well, that means he’s not as ‘wimpy’ as he thought he was. If Tony gets them, surely it’s normal that he does too. So, he takes Friday’s advice. She plays the most beautiful music through the room, and she talks him through different exercises to keep his heart rate calm. The room’s at the perfect temperature too. In fact, the whole environment is just perfect... and Peter realises he doesn’t want to leave.

He can’t go home... it would put May in danger. And if he doesn’t go home, where else could he

go? He hopes the answer to that is here. He wants to stay underneath Tony's wing. He's already bonded with the man, and he knows that it would be like losing someone dear again if they were pulled apart. He thinks that, even in this short time that they've known each other, that Tony likes him too. The way he looks at him sometimes, only sometimes (it's like he's ashamed- because Peter can only see it when he drops the mask he has around his face), it's the same way Ben smiled at him. Peter thinks that's a good thing.

And that night, as he listens to the small sound of footsteps (Tony's footsteps) near the door, he finds himself sleeping soundly for the first time in a while.

*Tony*

Tony paces back and forth down the corridor near Peter's room for a while until he can stay calm. He needs to take a breath and realise the kid will be okay underneath his watch, but it's not enough. It's only when Friday tells him some of the team has come upstairs that he finds himself walking away from him.

"You look tired," Clint says, bow on his back (Tony winces... shit, he missed training).

Tony checks his watch. It's 2pm. He found Pete at about 8am, and the kid looked exhausted- so he put him to bed then. But it's messed up his concept of time just a little bit. When looking outside, he expected to see the pitch-black sky- but instead it's all bright and birds are still chirping and- *oh*, Steve looks mad.

"Tony, this is the third week in the row that you've missed group training," Steve sighs, crossing his arms over like an annoyed teacher who's just caught a kid smoking outside the school grounds. "What's your excuse this time?"

"Right, okay. So, this is going to sound out there this time. And, really, I won't be surprised if you don't believe me here," Tony scratches the back of his head, a little smile on his face. "So...I maybe rescued an alien? Like, he's this little kid- and he's incredibly sweet... and he came from... space."

The team all look around and stare at him, mouths gaping. Expect for Thor, who looks like he's over the moon. It's like he's ecstatic that he might not be the only one anymore (and he has Tony to thank him for that, doesn't he?). Steve looks tired of him, and Natasha just laughs in his face. He thinks it's quite rude. But then again... he's not sure if he'd believe Peter if he hadn't found him in a research lab.

"It's not that hard to believe! We have an alien on our team!"

"Yeah? And where is this E-T then?" Clint asks, dropping his bow off on a special hook Tony had installed as soon as they all moved in. "Can he turn invisible?"

"*No*," Tony huffs. He pauses. "Well. I'm not sure. He could. We just met. I thought it would be quite rude to poke him with a stick and ask him what he can do, especially since I found him in the research's teams sector. They had this awful collar around him, guys- honestly, it was horrible. Anyway- yeah- he's asleep right now."

"Wait, Shield kidnapped him?" Steve asked, suddenly a lot more interested. He straightens up, his mind changing from 'Steve Rogers' to 'Captain America'. "Right, okay- so, I'll go talk to Fury and make sure I understand how this happened underneath his watch."

"Okay, Mr Righteous," Tony salutes. "But- just give it a second. I'm not sure if they were shield."

I'm not sure who was leading it... but some of the scientists in that room- I had no idea who they were. So, it's as if we've got a group underneath Shield acting on their own will. So, I wanted to figure out who that was before I go waltzing into Fury."

"Good idea, Tony," Steve says, forgetting all about the lost training session (hm, Tony thinks, he'll have to do this more regularly). Tony grins as Steve squeezes his shoulder. It's rare to get such a direct compliment from Steve...he's usually the brunt of a rant after Tony's ignored direct orders, so change is good. "We'll help you out on that."

Natasha glances at Tony, tilting her head to the side (it's not like Peter did earlier. His was sweet. Hers? Terrifying). "...Now, now, I never thought I'd see the day."

"What?" Tony says, biting his lip. What has she figured out now?

"Tony Stark wants to be a dad," Natasha grins. "You feel like you owe this kid something, and you think you could be good for him. Am I right?"

"Have we ever tested her for mutant powers?" The billionaire asks, turning his sight to Clint who's grinning at him in a creepy way. He turns, but the archer grabs his hand and twists him around quickly. Tony's eyes go wide. "What?"

"You *do* look like a dad!" Clint chuckles. "I mean- you've even tucked your shirt into the band of the joggers. Next thing we'll know is you'll be taking the old champ down on a fishing trip-,"

Tony huffs. "Right, okay. Look," he stops himself. "We're getting off topic now. There's an alien child in my spare bedroom and all of you are focusing on the fact that you think I'm a dad? If I was, that kid wouldn't be in a good state. He's better off being as far away from that relationship developing."

"Don't speak so badly of yourself, Stark!" Thor bellows, putting his arm around the man's shoulders. "Now, when can I meet this fellow alien? Did you hear what planet he was from?"

"No, actually. He just said it was destroyed two years ago when he came to Earth," Tony says, "But you can ask him yourself... tomorrow, when he's settled in. Okay?" he asks. "I don't want to scare him yet. The poor thing was trembling when I picked him up from that place. And who knows if people will try and come after him again? I want to make sure he's okay."

"How kind of you!" Thor grins. "You're an honourable warrior, son of Stark. I shall slot our meeting in my schedule. I'm looking forward to it." He looks up the ceiling, "Friday? Did you get that?" And when the AI responds with a simple 'yes' the God's face lights up. It's adorable, to be honest, and Tony has to chuckle as he walks away with Bruce following quick behind (and did Bruce look a little anxious today? Tony would have to check that out another day).

As the rest of the Avengers disperse, Tony grabs one of his tablets and sits outside of Peter's room scrolling through different gifts he thinks the little one might like. He spends hours putting clothes into his basket, as well as toys (he thinks kids of Peter's age might like to play with stuff like that still... right? Plus, he's an alien- developmental and mental age might differ) that cost thousands of dollars overall. And then, after he's spent all of that, he spends some time planning a room just in case the kid decides to stay. Only the best furniture, the best tech- and everything that would make him feel comfortable.

"Tony?" he hears a voice.

Looking up, Tony sees Peter standing by the door with messy hair. "Hey, kid," he smiles, standing

up. “Nice sleep?”

“Were you standing out here the whole time?” Peter asks, ignoring Tony’s question.

His face is unreadable. Tony’s not sure what to say here, so he tells the truth. “For the most of it. Had to step out for a second, but-,” Tony has the air blown out of him as Peter rushes forward and hugs him.

Peter hides his face in the light that’s on Tony’s chest. “Thank you,” he whispers, too close to tears to trust himself to look up. He feels found since the first time since Ben died- and he feels safe. All because of Tony.

Tony wraps his arms around Peter, “That’s okay, kid. That’s just fine.”

Maybe it’s going to be okay... but if it’s not, Peter’s met one more human he can trust with his life... and hopefully that means it will only go up from here.

## Safe With You

The thing is with saving a life, you never know what comes next

Tony stands in Peter's room as the first shipment comes through with all his stuff... but Peter is terrified of every person that walks in. Hovering by the billionaire's side, he holds onto his arm and just won't let go. And with a grip like his, it's a little painful (it's actually very painful, but he won't say otherwise).

Once they've all gone, Peter goes from the frightened spider in the corner of the room to a brave beast. He's in the middle of the room, opening all the boxes with a smile on his face. Showing them off to Tony, it's like every piece is a prize at the end of the tunnel. It's not until he gets to the end of the box that he struggles, looking down at it with a frown on his face.

Tony walks up to the young boy, sitting down beside him. Nudging the box away with his hand, he turns his attention onto Peter... who looks exactly like he does whenever everything gets too much. When it's all a bit too overwhelming. "So, what's up? How come you're all upset? I can tell, you know. It's my superpower. I can read everyone," he winks at him.

"I just don't think I can pay you back for all of this stuff, Mr Stark," Peter sighs. "I don't have any money... like, at all. I should've told you before you ordered it all... but I didn't know you were doing it-,"

"Kid," Tony smiles, rolling his eyes affectionately. "I have more money than I'd ever know what to do with. This? It's my gift, okay? I only wish that I got you more."

"More? Wow, Mr Stark. I don't think there's much more in the world at this point," Peter chuckles to himself, sighing. Looking around at all his new stuff, he is a little overwhelmed. There are loads. Blankets, toys, clothes, and even some technology... stuff he's always dreamed of owning. And now? Tony's got it for him like it's nothing (which it probably is to him... if he's being honest). "Thank you," he smiles.

"You're welcome, kiddo," Tony grins, ruffling his hair. "Now, I have some people that I'd like you to meet. If you're up to it."

Peter gulps. Biting his lip, he thinks of everything that could go wrong. Ever. He thinks of getting up, walking out of the room into a room of people he's never seen before. What if they don't like him? What if Tony realises that he's not good enough? He doesn't want to leave the man's side. He's his hero... the one person that saved him in a time of need. And if that all crumbles... so will Peter. But the man looks so excited now, so... he'll have to bite the bullet and let go. What's the worst that will happen?

"Okay," he whispers. "When?"

"Now? They're all in the living room now."

Peter puts on a brave face. After all, what more could he do? Standing tall, with Tony's assistance, he puts away a few things before he steps outside of the bedroom that he now calls his own.

There's a long corridor from the bedroom to the living room. So much so that he has enough time to prepare himself. The floorboards don't creak like they did in May's house, and this hallway is longer than it takes to get to the front door to the back. He'd be out in the garden, running around like a free animal, before he knew it- but here... it's bright, white, and empty. There's no life here,

just a place for Tony to stay when he's not in the lab doing work. And it makes Peter feel... well, scared is the right word. But when he looks up at Tony, who's standing only a few inches away from him, it's like the world changes and spins before his eyes. The hallway doesn't matter anymore, because his eyes are full of colour and admiration for the man who saved him. And he just hopes it will be this way until it's safe to be outside again.

Peter walks with his head low. He feels as if the world is telling him to stay like that. He shouldn't be allowed to be confident, to be the man that everyone smiles at as they cross the street. But it's not like he's a circus act anymore- it's more like he's a forgotten piece of trash blowing down the road. Nobody wants to see him. Nobody *can* see him, and maybe he should just fly up to the stars and find a different planet than this one... because it really doesn't feel like home. Maybe the person in front of him could change his mind.

The door to the living room swings open, and Peter freezes. There, just in front of him, was the rest of the Avengers from the television. Steve was stood tall in the middle, dressed in a sweater and jeans that looked far away from the usual Captain America uniform. By his side was Natasha Romanoff, hair tied into a plait that sits over her collarbones. She was wearing a jacket that was zipped up, a pair of skinny jeans underneath that took her away from the usual look of the Widow. It was nice. Behind the two of them on the sofa sat Clint and Bruce, both engaged into a conversation that Peter can hear. He can hear everything all the time, he just has to tune it out. Clint's in pyjamas, or so Peter thinks, whereas Bruce is wearing something formal as if he's just come back from a gala. And on the side- the person he was most excited to meet (once he thought it could be a possibility) was Thor. A fellow alien like himself- someone Earth embraced as their own. He was the only one in their uniform: full cloak and hammer, looking like he just popped in after a mission. Overall, everyone looked good... but very, very, intimidating.

Thor steps forward, but Tony gives him a look that tells him to stay where he is. He does. Peter feels like a temperamental animal- where people are told to 'let them come to you'. He looks to feet, ashamed, yet- they all seem so excited to see him that it warms his heart. Just a little. But it's not enough to kick him forward- to make him say hello.

Looking up at Tony, Peter inches over to him. He takes his hand. He sees everyone look over, obviously surprised that Tony's allowed it, and he goes to let go. But Tony just squeezes his hand and keeps it in his own. He's telling him it's all going to be okay, and Peter can't tell him just how badly he appreciates it.

"This is Peter," Tony announces. "He's going to be staying with us for the indefinite future. Until he wants to leave, really."

"Well, Peter, it's an honour to meet you, son," Steve smiles, staying just where he is.

The team must struggle themselves with their own problems, familiar feelings of worry and panic as Peter has. They might know to stay back because of this (or maybe they don't want to meet him). But, anyway, it makes him feel more comfortable at they do.

"Uh," Peter mumbles, eyes still on Tony. Tony nods back at him, telling him it's okay to talk. It's okay. They're not going to hurt him... they *won't*. "It's... it's nice to meet you too, sir."

"Peter!" Thor grins, walking over. He must see that Peter's just a little more comfortable now, so he ignores the way Tony looks over at him to bound over. His free hand is in front of Peter's face in an instant, his eyes begging the young boy to greet him. He's... a puppy, and a lot different to the stories of the 'fierce warrior' of Asgard that he's heard of from his mama back in the day. Thor's famous all over, after all, and Peter would be lying if he's not a little excited to meet the alien who conquered Earth's fears. "It's amazing to meet another like me. I must admit, I've been

looking forward to your arrival. I was told to be patient by the man of iron, and that I did.”

“Wow- uh- it’s really cool to meet you,” Peter says. Letting go of Tony’s hand, he takes Thor’s and chuckles a little underneath his breath at the power in the God’s swing. “Asgard has always been a story of honour. All the children on my planet knew of you... we all wanted to be just like you.”

“Oh no, little one, you are all so much more!” Thor smiles. Letting go of Peter’s hand, it lands on top of his shoulder. With a squeeze, Peter relaxes in his grip as if he’s hanging out with Ned’s cool uncle that they saw every now and then. So, weirdly enough, he feels as if Thor is his cool uncle from a long, long, way away. “Look at you! You came here all by yourself- and you sat there as these evil warriors took you. But you got out of it, and you still smile. And what a smile it is, young Peter. I’d be honoured to be like you.”

Peter must look teary eyed, as most adults in the room become mush. They make sure he’s okay, covering him with all this love that it’s overwhelming. When Peter looks at Tony, he looks... jealous. He’s brought into a hug from the billionaire, his head resting against the faint blue glow of the arc reactor. He can’t see any of the team... but maybe that’s the man’s intention behind the sudden embrace. It’s weird how well he knows him after only a day or so.

“Thank you all,” Peter whispers. “I never thought I’d feel this safe ever again.”

Tony pulls back, covering his face with his hand. He gently caresses his cheekbone with his thumb, looking down at Peter like a *father*... and he wonders how he cares this much in a matter of an evening. It baffles Peter. How can humanity be such a back and forth. It’s either up or down. They’re either evil to the point of destruction, or so kind that it hurts... And Peter’s just lucky he’s surrounded by some of the good ones... after too much time with the bad.

Clint walks over, “We’re gonna take of you, kiddo. I know just how much energy you scamps have. I have a few of my own. And can I just say- you speak impeccable English.”

“Been here for two years, Mr Barton. I’ve picked it up a little,” he smiles. “But I have a universal translator. Well, I did. May’s got it in a safe somewhere. I could understand or speak any language I’d like. It was a life saver... but I had to fit in- so I had to leave it behind.”

Tony’s eyes go wide, like he’s just heard of a beauty too hard to take in. “A universal translator? Woah, that’s incredible.”

With such a lust for technology, Peter thought he was the only one around who cared that much for an old piece of tech. Well, old for his planet. For Earth, it was unheard of. “I could show you how to make it, Mr Stark. The one I had was something my mama made me- but she taught me the steps. Just in case I ever lost mine. Would you like that?”

“Would I ever? Kid. You’ve just made my year.”

Peter feels proud of himself, but it’s a little bittersweet. Because he now realises it’s the only reason Tony’s kept him on board. He doesn’t want to keep him safe... he just wants what everyone else wants. Surely? Answers to questions he could never answer. Technology he couldn’t dream of. And Peter? Peter can give him all of that. And it’s like he’s right back into captivity again.

“G-Good,” Peter stutters, eyes darting anyone from anybody who looks at him.

He meets Natasha and Bruce at the same time. They seem a little more... calm (if that’s the word) than the others. Tony told him Natasha was scary, but it’s like she’s the warmest to him. She stays at a distance, simply smiling at him and telling him she’d be right here if he needed anything. It

warms Peter's heart. Bruce's a little scared, it looks like. He's shaking just as much as Peter is. Maybe it's the anxiety, or perhaps it's the fear he'll hulk out and hurt the already traumatised kid. Peter likes to think he'd keep up with him.

After a while of forced conversations, Peter feels as if he's had enough.

"I'd... I'd like to go now," he whispers into Tony's ear, unaware that Steve (and most of the team, considering how close they were all stood near him) could hear. "If that's okay."

"Yeah? Kid, that's fine. You can do whatever you want here. You're free. If you want to walk out that front door, be my guest. You're in charge here," Tony smiles, moving his arm around the young boy as he directs him out of the living room with nothing but a wave.

Once they're around the corner, Tony tells him he's just popping back to grab his jacket he left behind... but Peter knows the truth. He's going to talk to them about their best course of action to keep him here- or... or he'll tell them to make sure Peter's 'safe' enough to trust them before- or maybe he's being a little dramatic. But all he hears as he listens into their conversation is a faint "He'll warm up to you." He wonders who it's directed to.

"What do you want to do, bud?"

"Uh, I-I don't know. How about... I go make that thing for you? I can get it done in like two hours... I just need the equipment for it. Trust me, Mr Stark, I'll make sure it works."

Tony tilts his head to the side. He's confused. "No, no- kid," he sighs, "I can see it all in your face. That piece of equipment is not the reason you're here. You're here because I really want to make sure you're doing okay. You've been through a lot. More than anyone could think- and you're in this foreign *planet*- yet you're doing amazing. And I (and the people you love)- am so proud of you. So, if that's what you think you're doing here, then I don't want it. I'd rather we go down and make a tiny piece of crap that doesn't even more if that's what you think is going on here."

"Really? You're being serious, Mr Stark?"

"Yep."

Peter fiddles with the end of his sleeve. A nervous quirk he's picked up from Ben throughout the last two years, it's clear to Tony that he's still not comfortable here. Standing quite still, Tony sees the rigid lines of worry seeping into his skin- the way he's trying so hard to make himself look tall- look brave- but it's so transparent. Tony could see it all from a mile away.

"Right, okay," Tony interrupts, putting a hand on his shoulder. "We're scrapping all of that. Me and you are going to leave the lab alone for tonight. We're going to sit on my floor, in my movie room, just the two of us, and we're going to watch some film. I'll introduce you to some classics- trust me, kid, I know my stuff. You're going to be the biggest film buff of your generation once we're done."

"I like Star Wars..."

"Well then... you're going to love everything else I have in line for you."

Tony takes Peter up to the movie room. It's big, covered in comfy red velvet seats that recline so far back they almost turn into a straight line. They each are covered in different cushions, ones that are fluffy and nice. Peter's almost scared to ruin them. When the teenager looks up, he winces as he makes eye contact with the light. But it's not a bright white like he'd expect. Instead, it's a soft red glow which matches the colour of the seats. Once he makes his way to the front of the room,



he's shocked. The screen is *huge*.

"Cool, isn't it?" Tony laughs, choosing a seat in the second row. "It's a better view here. The first one makes you crane your neck up a little."

"Oh."

"Yeah, it's not good."

"This is awesome, Mr Stark,"

"Yeah, isn't it? I love it," Tony smiles, gently manoeuvring Peter so he sits down too. "If this blows your socks off, just you wait for the actual film."

The film is Star Trek. Peter wasn't sure if he'd like it. He hears the 'star' and assumes it's just a rip from Star Wars (and he really loves those films, so he wasn't sure if anything could come close to it). But it's filled with such character, and the footage of the stars remind him of home. The bright glow, lighting up the darkness...

"You're a bit like a star to me," Peter says to Tony as the credits start to roll.

They both enjoy the film. Peter's sitting up in his seat with his feet dangling by the billionaire's chair. It's clear he's more comfortable, and that makes Tony ecstatic. It was his only goal, responsibilities he has for Stark Industries and the Avengers sitting on the back burner. If anyone wanted to argue it, they'd have to speak to him first. And he might not like sitting in boring meetings with presidents of boards, or people who feel the need to constantly nag, but when it came to Peter- he'd sit in thousands of them to make sure they don't lay a hand on him. He isn't something to just observe- he's more than that.

"I am?"

"Yeah," Peter nods. "When Ben died, and when they got me- oh, Mr Stark, I thought it was the end. I couldn't move- I couldn't breathe once they opened the door. I was terrified of everything they did to me. And it was so dark. All I could see at the end of the road was a complete pit. I didn't think I'd ever get out and then you burst through the door. You were that bright glow that lit up everything for me. And I know I don't trust you yet, and that I think you're working for them every other minute, but- I will get better at that. I promise."

Tony leans over to the kid, ruffling his hair. It's a nice thing to do. Tony had imagined sitting like this with a kid of his own one day. He'd never be ready for it- parenting reminding him too much of his absent father- but he'd love them more than life itself. Tony knows Peter isn't his, he knows they've known each other for a few days, and he could be a lot more trouble than he's putting on- but he's an innocent kid. And Tony can't help but think the universe sent him to Earth for a reason. Maybe. He could, however, be wrong. Even if he is, he's decided that he loves this kid and that means (even if it's not biological) he's his kid already.

"You know that you did the same for me?" Tony asks, pulling him over so that they can snuggle in together on the seat. "I constantly feel as if I'm doing things wrong. As if I'll never be good enough in this line of work. It was dark for me too- so, if we're continuing with this analogy, we're both each other's stars. It doesn't work logistically, but we're not talking in literal terms, or I'd be up in the sky in a big ball of gas."

Peter leans his head on Tony's shoulder, wrapping his arms around the man. He finds himself gravitating towards the bright light on his chest once more. "I'm glad that we found each other

then, Mr Stark,” he whispers, “Or, uh- that you found me.”

“Me too, kiddo. Me too.”

They put on another film in the background, but it only takes twenty minutes for the two of them to drift away into a deep sleep. The movie’s still playing, blaring out loud noises that it’s almost impressive for Peter to keep the sounds out. But he does. However, it does attract another super soldier that’s in the building. Steve.

Steve walks in, “Hi, Tony. Is the kid-,” he stops, seeing the sight before him. A warm smile spreads on his face. Getting out his phone to sneak a photo, he jumps out of his skin when it’s knocked out of his hand. A very frightened, shaking, kid is staring up at him with a fear in his eyes that it worries the captain. “Peter? It’s okay. I won’t hurt you- I was just taking a photo because you both looked so nice together. I’m sorry for scaring you.”

Peter’s eyes grow as wide as saucers as he bends down to get the phone off the floor. He puts it in Steve’s hands, glancing back at Tony who’s still out like a light. “I’m so sorry, sir. I thought you were someone else. I thought... I thought they were coming back for me. I’m sorry,” he rants, avoiding all eye contact by looking at a stain on the carpet floor (he was told it was Clint who threw some salsa at Tony after a long movie marathon a month or two ago. It gets heated during those nights... or so he’s been told).

“There’s no need to apologise, buddy. We’ve all been there,” Steve tries to reassure him. He steps forward to put a hand on his shoulder, but Peter falls back and lands on the floor. He’s staring up at Steve, shaking his head. “I’m going to wake up Tony, okay?”

“No,” Peter interjects, “No, please. I don’t want to annoy him. Please don’t. I’ll do anything- just, don’t. Please.”

“Okay. But you must listen to me here, Peter. You have to breathe,” Steve tells him. “You’re going to hurt yourself if you don’t. Just take a deep breath in for me, okay? Then out. And then all you have to do is repeat that repeatedly.”

Peter does what he’s told to do. He breathes in and out, and then does it again. As he gets more and more comfortable, he looks up at Steve and sees another person who’s here just to make sure he’s okay. But all he wants is Tony to grab him and tell him it’s all going to be just fine. It’s not that he can’t trust Steve- he just needs the reassurance from Tony. He can’t understand himself- he doesn’t know why- but he just knows it’s what he needs.

“It’s going to be just fine, son.”

Peter might start to believe him.

With all the commotion, Tony fidgets in his sleep and eventually finds himself wide awake. He sees Peter cowering on the floor, and Steve standing there with a helpless look of worry on his face, and he knows just what to do (somehow).

Getting off the chair he was just asleep in, he kneels beside Peter and tugs him over until he’s resting against the arc reactor. “You’re going to be okay. In fact, I think you’ll be great.”

Steve watches, and he slowly moves out of the room. Once he closes the door, he leans against the wall and takes a deep breath. How Tony knows what to do, he’ll never know. All he does know is that he’s doing a good job. Having Peter here is amazing for Tony, just as having Tony is perfect for Pete. And as he looks down at his phone that now has a little scratch, he smiles. He’s incredibly

proud of his friend for stepping up, and he's happy that the amazing kid is going to get the happiness he so deserves. He's very much looking forward to the future.

## Secrets

The concept of an alien is something so farfetched that nobody would ever believe it to be true. 'It's just fiction' they'd scream, 'there's no way they're out there'. That was, of course, before Thor came down from Asgard and proved that he existed- as well as the rest of the further universe that the humans had not got to yet. It opened an assortment of problems consisting of delight, wonder, and (unfortunately) a whole lot of fear.

To Peter, the people who tried their best to break him are they themselves aliens. They come from a different planet to him, but he's not interested in what makes them tick, or how to exploit their every move for his own benefit. Maybe it's because he's grown up with alien visitors coming in and out of his planet, but- maybe it's because his heart has no need to be cruel. And he knows that he's fine living his day-to-day mundane life without wanting more. And that's all humans want. More.

Coming downstairs, Peter checks the calendar on the wall and realises it's been at least two months since Tony came into that room and saved his life. The billionaire updates him daily if the teen's captors had been found, but it's always 'we're getting there'. Peter's starting to think they're nowhere near.

"Kid?" Tony says from the doorway, "You alright? You've been staring at the wall for two minutes."

"Fine," Peter responds, walking over to his knight in shining armour. He finds himself underneath Tony's arm, as if it's a comfort place. It's safe home- where he can tuck his head against his chest and close his eyes. Staying like that, he'll be okay. Because Tony cares for him, and he's not like every other human. "Better now."

"Yeah, same," Tony chuckles, adjusting where he was standing so he can hug back with more efficiency. "May I ask what brought this on?"

"Nothing. Just missed you."

Tony's been on a trip for the last two days, and Peter hasn't dared to speak to anyone else. Steve stayed behind with him because of an injury (and they needed some security just in case any kidnappers popped in for a visit), but the Captain barely got a sentence out of the kid over the entire period. Peter realises he doesn't want the man to go again, but he knows that it's a bit selfish of him to think like that.

"Missed you too, buddy."

Tony lets go, sighing. Peter looks exhausted. Red eyes and eye-bags that shouldn't be visible on a boy of his age, he can tell the kid's been up and waiting for him to come back. That dependency is something that Tony would be annoyed about if it was from anyone else, but this is a kid he cares for. If he's honest, it's as if he's got a surrogate son living with him and he wouldn't want to change this for anything else- but he knows he needs to teach the kid how to be independent. What's going to happen when Tony has an injury? What if he dies one day?

It's not like Peter doesn't know how to behave out in 'normal' life. He has two years of it with Ben and May. Yet now there's this barrier stopping him. He doesn't know who's going to be behind him, lurking in the shadows, and he can't put anyone he loves in danger anymore. So, he's going to stay inside (or maybe go far, far, away) until he can figure out how to get out of here.

That's right. Waiting for Tony, he realised it's time he takes a ship, or whatever, to fly home. It can't be any normal rocket. His planet is too far away. It needs to be sophisticated... He needs to get back to the Universal Neural Teleportation Network. It's an artificial network his mama told him about, when she'd tell him stories of how others got to their planet so quickly. A section of generating wormholes in space, called Jump Points, that enables spaceships to fast travel across the universe.

Remembering a story that a raccoon called 'Rocket' told him once (after he tried to steal his friend's fake leg) that jumping too far is dangerous, but it's an enjoyable time, Peter's had many fantasies of jumping across the galaxy, and if it got him far away from Earth- then so be it. Maybe, if he's lucky, Tony might want to come with him... but that's just a dream.

"Are you sure that you're feeling okay?" Tony asks, "You're not yourself. I mean- you're quiet, but you're never *this* quiet."

"I...I want to leave, Mr Stark. I don't want to be on Earth anymore."

Tony's face falls. It's not as if it's a surprise. Tony's been waiting for the day the kid changes his mind about living here. It's been too good. They've been so happy together. Spending time in the lab, like a duo that's pulled together by a magnetic pull, Tony's never felt as carefree. A smile on his face, now and forever, but... much like everything good in his life, it ends. And it's not the kid's fault. It's never the kid's fault. It's better for him if he's out of this hellscape, but God if it burns to hear him say it.

With a bite of his lip to hide the obvious distress, Tony lets go and leans back against the doorframe once more and crosses his arms over his chest. "Yeah, yeah, that's cool. That's fine. And, uh, how do you think you're going to do that?"

"I don't know. If I'm honest. I just know that this- it's too much for me. I'm scared twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. I don't know who's coming for me, and when. I just want to be able to live normally."

"...I get it, kid. I do. But if that's the only reason you want to leave, I can help you. I swear. I can," Tony says, his voice almost teetering on begging. It's a little pathetic, but when you've become so attached it's a hard to live by the 'if you love someone, let them go' mantra. "But... if you're really wanting to go then, of course, I'll help you."

Lab times turn sombre. Working together to simply find a way for Peter to leave, there's this tug in Tony's heart that he can say quite confidently he doesn't like. He watches Peter work, all fluffy hair with a focused face, and he's not sure how to make him stay. He knows it would be wrong of him to force the 'alien' to stay on Earth... he's had enough of that recently, but sometimes you find someone that fits so perfectly in your life like a puzzle piece and letting that go would be catastrophic.

So, he's subtle with it. When Peter loves something that they eat, he'll make an off-sure comment that sounds something like 'hm, don't think you could get that anywhere else but Earth'. Or he'll put his jacket around the kid when he's sleeping, draping him in his mother's blanket to prove how good he is at this 'surrogate dad' stuff. He'll go out of his way to buy Peter presents, using a lot of his wealth to spoil the kid in luxuries.

But when you're trying to bribe a good being with a clearer conscience than glass, it's impossible. Money isn't what the kid wants. He's too afraid of love. And, unfortunately, it turns out that you can get most 'Earthly' food on every planet... and, just like that, all his bargaining chips are lost. There's not much more the Earth can really offer someone like Peter. If this new venture of his

will finally put a real smile on his face, Tony just has to accept the fact that it's happening and move on.

When Peter puts his mind to how he's going to do this, it hits him that he hasn't thought of everything keeping him behind. Would he ever see Ned and MJ again? May? Does he really want to say goodbye to Tony? But... he keeps telling himself it's the safest option. Yet, as Tony goes upstairs to get them some snacks Peter ends up sobbing over his worktop.

"Pete?"

"I'm scared, Tony."

"I know, bambino," Tony whispers, reaching over to hold Peter's face in his hands. "I don't think you know how strong you are."

"You tell me all the time," Peter responds, but that's what scares him.

They're bonding too quickly for Peter's liking. He knows exactly what Tony will say, or what he's feeling- and tearing that bond apart is the worst feeling in the world. He knows, he's been through it with a whole lot of people/aliens. At least with the ones he lost- there's no ache in his heart that tells him to go back- because, for all he knows, Tony will always be there waiting.

And that's how Peter's night ends. He closes his eyes as he hugs Tony's chest, his body eventually relaxing against that familiar blue light. When Tony takes him to his bed, he climbs into the sheets and holds the singular plush he likes the most out of the (at least) one hundred the billionaire brought him. As soon as the door closes and Tony leaves... Peter feels empty. It's sad that he can't be himself without Tony around, and it's just going to make leaving a whole lot harder.

Falling asleep is a fool's game. It's irresponsible of Peter to think that just because he's under the covers that he's safe. He's not. There's no way. Because as soon as he closes his eyes, he dreams, and sometimes dreaming is worse than reality.

Peter's powers blossomed into the ability to see. Everyone from his planet had good eyesight, yet Peter was the best of them all because he could see far beyond just the physical world. He saw into the future. At times, his spider sense was just a flicker or a feeling of something coming- but it developed. And now, sometimes, when he slept, he saw glimpses (almost as if they were pieces of a bigger picture) of a future... of things that might happen.

The first time it happened, he wrote it off as simple 'déjà vu'. Young, confused, and powerful beyond anyone on his planet, he didn't know what was happening to him. But then it happened again. He saw his dad coming home and tripping on the carpet, spilling their only carton of milk for the week. He dreams of his friend running around in their school yard, yelling at the teacher that they had more time to play, and it wasn't time to go back to lessons. He dreams of fire, and the next week their neighbours house burst into flames. Only then did he tell someone, because otherwise he would've gone crazy.

They didn't test on him. All they did was ask him questions, to which he happily answered. And life went on.

One night he went to bed, and he saw only a small glimpse of something strange. It was his mother holding him close as she cried her heart out. Their foreheads touching, she was mouthing words he couldn't quite see. She looked depressed, heart-broken, but hopeful too. In the background of their embrace was red. Pure chaos. A world on fire... It would be a normal Friday night in his neighbourhood if it wasn't so prominent.

And that vision was from the day his planet fell, to the day where he lost his parents and fell far, far, away to Earth. The same day he met May and Ben. A day that was so far away, but so close at the same time.

Slipping into the silk sheets Tony paid for, Peter closed his eyes and was out like a light the second his head touched the memory foam pillow. He sleeps soundly for a while, until the usual sign of something coming pops into his head. He sees Pierce, a man he's tried so hard to forget, standing in the open like he has nothing to hide. And he sees the back of a familiar head. Tony's.

Freaking out, Peter sits up and looks around the room. There's no way... right? Tony wouldn't do that to him... not after all they have been through together. He puts his heart over his rapidly increasing heartbeat, trying his best to keep his calm.

Was Tony just using him all this time? Was he trying to get into his head? To manipulate him until they had the information that they needed...? Peter was right. He knew this was all too good to be true. A comfortable bed, nice clothes, and a person who pretended like he loved him. It's worse than the collar they put around his neck. And Peter, the idiot he really is, fell for it. Because why did he think that something was going right for him? It was stupid. He should've known. And now he's the one who is going to pay for it.

Peter rushes to the side of the room, grabbing the first backpack he can find. Shoving some essentials in it, he throws it over his shoulder and tells Friday to keep this to herself. Sneaking out the door, he sees a light on in the kitchen. Curious, he peeks through the glass- and there- there he is.

Pierce is stood right in the middle, smiling. And Tony- he's doing nothing. He's letting Pierce talk, yet Peter can't hear what he's saying. Tony really has been working for them this entire time... Peter wants to pretend as if he's not surprised. How can he? He's seen the evil that humanity has to offer, but he never expected it from the man who held him as he cried or sat and watched hours of films with him just because he wanted to cheer him up. In a way, it's worse than the torture. His heart has been ripped out, crushed under the weight of Tony's betrayal... and he doesn't think he'll ever get it back.

*Ten minutes ago*

"Pierce?" Tony questions, wondering up from the lab after Friday's informed him that they have unusual visitor on the floor. "What are you doing here?"

"I heard about your alien visitor. Also heard you were trying to find the group of Shield workers that did this dastardly thing to the kid," Pierce smiles, but it makes Tony feel a little queasy. The man looks like Ursula, a wide smile and a menacing grin that would make even the Hulk shiver. He's never liked him. "And I have some news for you."

"Oh? Who was it then?"

"The man you're looking for is Brock Rumlow."

Tony sighs. He should've known. He's had a feeling that the man was nothing but trouble, and to know it was him all along that took Peter and that he's just been walking around like nothing was wrong... it kills Tony. He must look angry, as Pierce runs his hand over his shoulder and gives him an attempt of a sympathetic smile.

"Oh, I know. It's horrible. The poor teen must have been so scared. Trust me, I get that you want to go off on him but leave it to me... I'll make sure he gets the sanctions he deserves."

“Is he not your second in command?” Tony asks.

How did Pierce not know what Rumlow was doing? Was he in on it? There’s not much that can fool Tony, and the way the man’s acting is suspicious. He’s known Pierce to be this cold, scary, man. Pushing the blame onto someone under his work force is one hundred percent a thing that he’d do. So, what does Tony think? Does he let this man fool him? Or does he trust someone for the first time in a while?

“Exactly, Mr Stark. That’s exactly why I should be the one to reprimand him. I, after all, do know him very well.”

“If you knew him like you say you do, then how did he get away with this behind your back?”

“Mr Stark.... I know you are close to this alien now, but Rumlow was simply doing what he thought was best for our wider community. We both know that he went too far, but I do not think he meant it maliciously.”

“Not doing it maliciously?!” Tony repeats, shocked. “How dare you- I can’t even comprehend what you just said. He had an electric collar around a young kid’s neck after he just killed his uncle. And you think that’s what is best for the ‘wider’ community. Give me a break, Pierce. Were you in on this or not?”

“I don’t understand what you’re trying to say here.”

“Did you-,” Tony stops himself, taking a deep breath before he got too mad. “Tell me the truth. Did you hurt Peter?”

“Give me a break!” Pierce explodes. He runs his hand across his hair and stares angrily at Tony. “Why do you care so much about it?! It was information, Tony. It was days away from telling us how to travel amongst the stars like our many neighbours do. Think of the money! Think of how it will benefit our people! Surely one teenager is not worth the lives of so many. Are you that selfish?”

“The fact that you don’t see how messed up you are... it’s the most frightening part of all, Pierce. He’s a child. He’s not your plaything, and he’s certainly not alive just to give you information. He’s loving, kind, and he’s got more of a brain than you’ll ever have.”

Just as Pierce was about to angrily reply, his eyes tip over to the side of the room where he spots something that makes him flash a smile. He leans in, shaking Tony’s hand. Tony’s confused, not knowing where he was going with this, when he spots Peter running from the corner of his eye. The kid thinks he’s working with his torturer... all the trust they’ve built, their relationship, it’s all been torn apart because of one, fake, handshake.

“Peter!” Tony shouts, pushing past Pierce. He doesn’t care what the man does in that moment. He doesn’t care about anything other than the kid sprinting down the hallway. He’s getting smaller and smaller, and there’s nothing Tony will ever be able to say that would stop him. “Pete! Please!”

But... he’s too fast. And Tony doesn’t want to use the suit. He can’t jump into his armour and force the kid to come back. He’s made his choice. But Tony can’t pretend it doesn’t hurt. He walks back into the living room, punching Pierce (who’s standing in *Tony’s* living room with a sly smile on his face as he’s won) straight in the face. He hits Pierce again. And again. Hopefully he can make him feel just like Peter did. But apparently, Pierce has been training. And he manages to hit back- and it becomes a full-on fist fight until Steve Rogers pulls him away- still kicking and screaming.



“Tony? What’s going on?” Steve says, with his voice stern- acting like the captain of the team that he is. He wipes a bit of blood of the man’s cheek, concern all over his face- nobody looks over at Pierce.

“Ask that asshole,” Tony interjects, pushing himself away from Steve’s body, “ask him why I no longer have a wonderful kid in this house, ask him why Peter was so damn afraid of everyone. It’s all his fault.”

Before he could see how that went down, Tony storms out of the room and finds himself standing in Peter’s room. He stares at every piece of furniture, the bed not made. He can see where Peter was sleeping. Yet, that plush he loved so much is nowhere to be found. Most of the stuff Tony brought for him is still all over the floor... and it just reminds Tony of how much he lost. He remembers sitting on that exact part of the bed as poor Peter cried his heart out and told Tony how much he felt safe here.

And now he’s not safe at all.

Peter’s out there... probably cold and alone. He’ll be terrified that Pierce is going to get him again. And what if he does? Pierce won’t be stupid enough to set up ‘shop’ in Shield’s headquarters again. He’ll go somewhere else. Because he’ll escape sanction. There are no laws on aliens... so, is it technically lawful that he did what he did? What if they kill him and Tony has to mourn *his* kid for the rest of his life? Tony can’t go through that. He has to get to the kid. He has to.

It must be hours later when Steve comes into the room.

“Tony?”

Tony doesn’t reply.

“Tony? Look, uh, we can find him.”

“And how are we going to do that, Steve? Hm, what expert ideas are you going to come up with to get my kid back?”

“I know you’re hurt, Stark, but there’s no need-,”

“No need? Steve, my kid’s out there. They’re going to get him, and you think this is time for pleasantries? Tell me, did you patch him up and send him to the med-bay with an ice pack? He almost killed Peter. He attached an electric collar to his neck and kept him in a room and you’re telling me there’s no need to be angry? I really don’t get you.”

“I understand that you’re angry.”

“Steve, man, you don’t understand anything right no-,”

“Tony,” Steve interrupts, taking a deep breath. “You’re not going to help Peter by standing here and complaining. Get in a suit. Ask Jarvis. If you’re this worried, do something. And, no, I didn’t send him off to the med bay. In fact, I got a few punches in myself once I realised what was going on. And if you didn’t storm out, you would’ve seen that I sent him into Shield custody.”

Tony looks over at the captain, guilt trickling through his veins. He sighs, looking down at his feet as if he was ashamed. He can’t let Steve see his tears. It’s too embarrassing. But when he feels a hand on his shoulder, he looks up and Steve can see just how vulnerable he looks.

“I know it hurts, Tony. I know how hard it is to lose someone you love so dearly. But we can get

him back. And we will,” Steve says, “I promise.”

Tony doesn't know what comes over him, but he leans forward and wraps his arms around his friend's body. Steve responds immediately by holding him back, his hand in Tony's hair to comfort him. “It's going to be fine,” he whispers, “Peter's going to be fine. He'll be okay, and so will you,” he affirms, squeezing him a little tighter as Tony's sobs start to rack through his body.

“I miss him already,” Tony sniffs, “I-I want him to be safe, Steve.”

“And he will be. We'll send people to go out and look for him-,”

“No, no- no, he won't like that. He doesn't like people, and he'll see them, and he'll think that we're just trying to kidnap him again. We can't let Shield get him, Steve. We can't.”

“Okay,” Steve says. He lets go, watching how Tony quickly wipes his tears with his sleeve. Tony's embarrassed, but there's no reason to be. “Then we'll go. We'll go out every single day until we can get him back. Until he's home.”

“You'll help?”

“Of course, Tony. Because that kid has stole a lot of people's hearts. Not just yours. And all we want is to know he's okay.”

Knowing Peter's out there, Tony struggles to sleep. He twists and turns in the bed, so much so that he ends up on the floor somewhere throughout the night. But he doesn't care. Until he gets Pete back, he's numb- and he wonders if this is how parents feel when their kid's go missing. It's the most horrible feeling in the world, and he'd never wish it on his worst enemy. Never. Because there's this piece missing from him, and until he gets him back... well, he'll never be whole again.

## On The Run

Peter wishes that he could fly, so he could jump and go as far away from here as he wanted. The stars seem so far away, but in reality Peter's been around them and they're not as grand as some might believe. In fact, space is terrifying. It's vast, cold, unforgiving, and it makes Peter feel like nothing if he looks around for too long. He's just one thing in a universe of trillions, what gives him the right to feel anything but ordinary?

Tony once treated him like he was something special, as if he cared for no-one else like he did for him. He loved Pepper, but he also loved Peter in a father-son sort of way. Peter's experienced that love before but having it again and having it so strong is something else.

But then he had that vision. His dreams were haunting, taunting him that all of this was false and having a loved one wasn't in the cards for an alien. A 'man' so far out of place that even his heart would never be accepted in a place like this.

The feeling in his heart when he saw Tony talking so openly with his kidnapper made his stomach twist into a tight knot, made him feel sick and turned his face green. His hands started shaking, his legs wobbly, and he ran before he could think straight. There's not another feeling quite like betrayal. Anger, sadness, happiness, he can deal with them. Other emotions are like an old family friend, somebody you'd miss but sometimes you remember why you don't speak anymore. But betrayal is something of a stranger, and- oh, wow- it's like every bad dream he's had cannot compare. Tony could've reached into his heart and torn it out, and it still would've felt the same.

Now, he's in a place he doesn't know. There's a large stretch of forest miles away from the compound, and it's just the place Peter thinks he could hide. It's hidden, filled with trees he can climb, and might have some food available if he looks hard enough.

If his diet consists of insects and the odd small mammal that he'll have to sacrifice, he'll have to deal with it. Going out and grabbing a burger is impossible. Firstly, he has no money. Secondly, it's not safe to be out in the open. Who knows when a man in armour will fly down to him, picking him up to pretend he cares once more?

Therefore, he walks in amongst the trees and takes a seat on a log. Looking up through the open canopy of trees, he studies the sun and wonders what time of day it is. He's going to be here for a long time, it's best he gets used to it.

*Tony, one week later*

"There's no update?" Tony says, biting his lip as Friday relays everything she could find on Peter's whereabouts for that afternoon.

Tony shakes his head to himself as Friday tells him 'no', trying to pretend this isn't as frustrating and terrifying as he finds it. He paces to the other side of the lab, looking at their blueprints for a fake superhero suit Peter thought of one evening. They were going to make it one day.

"Fuck, Pete. Where the hell are you?" he mumbles to himself.

Tony huffs, sitting down at his desk. Putting his head in his hands, he stares at the white paint on his desk. He tries so hard not to start crying, but then he imagines how hard it is out there. What if they captured Pete again? What if he's in a lab right now getting prodded with all sorts? He'd think Tony's behind it, and he'll probably die thinking that nobody alive loved him... and it's simply not

true.

If Peter was here, he'd be sat on the desk or on the other side of Tony's lab. With him, he'd be attentive, happy, and ranting about new things he found on Earth that he loves. He was beginning to understand himself, developing underneath Tony's nose and all of him felt so proud to see it happening.

He was a funny kid, a bit too much like Tony in some senses. He'd never talk too much to the team, which was a boast Tony always used whenever they had an argument. If Steve said he didn't have a leg to stand on, it would be 'hm, if I'm not good- then why does Peter love me so much?'. It was always a bit of a low blow using the kid as a pawn of sorts, but, hey, it worked! And it made him feel good for all of a second.

Tony gets up from the desk, grabbing the framed photo of them both. He stares at it for a while, before putting it down. Knowing he'd throw it out of frustration and break the only intact copy he had... he couldn't do that. Because with that photo, a little bit of Pete was still with him. Plus, he had plenty of other stuff to throw around the room in frustration instead.

Tony walks upstairs, hoping he'd ignore this feeling in his heart if he could get out of the lab and away from the centre of their memories. Steve's waiting outside, as if he was about to walk in, and they bounce into each other.

"Tony!" Steve says, biting his lip, scared that he's hurt the man in front of him (he's vulnerable recently, and they've all noticed it). "Are you okay?"

At the same time, Tony yells "Rogers!" out of frustration. "Watch where you're going with all of that- you know how much your pecs are a hazard."

"...Sorry?"

"Yeah, right. Anyway- why were you so close to my door and what have I missed this time?"

Steve looks down, "uh, Pierce got out of his holding cell. Probably bribed some of the guards, but we'll never know which one. Last thing we know, he was walking out and heading-,"

"Heading after Peter? Of course, he is," Tony says, running his hand through his hair with a stressed groan. "Fuck sake. Steve, we can't. We can't let him do that, man. If he gets him then- then he'll-,"

"I know," Steve sighs sadly, "we'll get him, Tony, and we'll get Peter back and if we just tell him what happened... he'll understand."

"Maybe we... don't?"

"What? Why?"

Tony looks at Steve, and then back at the sofa where he held Peter as they watched a film together. Then he remembers the broken look on his face when he ran, and he realises that the boy is far better without him in his life. He needs stability, and isn't that what his aunt is? The kid should've never stayed here, he should've gone back as soon as Tony took him from Pierce. Then, maybe, it wouldn't have been this hard on Tony after he inevitably broke everything they had. He could barely be a friend, never mind a dad.

"Tony, you're not making any sense. You're worrying me. All this effort to go and look for the kid, and the first thing you'll do when you find him is let him go? It just doesn't make sense."

"I don't want to let him go! I love him, and that's why I have to!" Tony shouts.

He's breathing hard, heart beating against his chest like an out of rhythm drum. Steve sees it, because he always does, and Tony lets his eyes close for only a second or two. Looking into Steve's pitiful eyes is too painful because all he feels like is some spectacle, a mess that everyone knows will never get better. And all he wants is to be happy again. Why does feeling good take a journey for him, and nothing for others? What did he do that makes it impossible to just... feel?

"Please, just leave me alone. And stop looking at me like that. It must be so weird for you to see me care about another person like this. But I promise. Steve, I promised him that I'd look after him and he saw me talking to his kidnapper? There will be no trust there, and he'll be so hurt that he might not want me to come looking for him. So, he's going back to his aunt. Where he belongs."

"He loves you just as much as his aunt, I think he deserves a say in this..."

"Steve, stay out of this. Okay? It's not any of your business."

"But if it hurts you?"

"Then it's especially not any of your business," Tony tells him, before he walks straight past the other and up to his bedroom. Because if there's no news on Peter, then he's going to sleep to pretend he's right there beside him.

### *Peter*

An unmarked, white van trails beside Peter for at least ten minutes the second he leaves the forest. He thinks it might be okay to try and walk somewhere else, but maybe it's not. The van never speeds up to get past him, just trailing slowly... and slowly. Other cars overtake it, yet it stays the same speed. Constant. Maybe it's broken down, or perhaps it's something more sinister. There's got to be something going on here.

Peter stops. The van does too.

It's like a crappy horror film, and if his life had a soundtrack than all he'd be listening to right now is that dramatic organ music. He only knows of those because of Tony... and all that fun they had together before it was all over... before he had to go.

Peter runs- the people in the van get out and they run just as fast.

Take a breath, Peter, he says to himself as his legs move by themselves. He jumps through water, leaves, anything you'd find in a forest, and eventually finds himself out in an open field which is caged in by some tall fences. There's nowhere to hide, and they're still coming for him, so he has to keep going and tell himself that he'd make the jump.

"Please!" he shouts, as he gets so out of breath that he must turn around for a second or two, "no, no, I can't- I can't go through all of that again. I just want to be normal! Please!"

They get closer, like a bunch of brainwashed soldiers with no free will. Their eyes are scary, their pupils little and only the white of their eyes showing. Peter runs backwards, picking up some speed. But some of them catch up, and he knows he has to fight to keep himself safe. He hasn't done this in a while, his movements sloppy compared to how good he was underneath his mama's guidance. But he's still good.

Like a wave on top of the water, he moves easily around the three men that gained some distance on him. Working with his feet, he jumps and kicks and two of them go down within half a minute.

The third is more of a challenge, the man standing over a foot taller than him.

“...I’m not- I’m not weak, sir, and I’m definitely not on this earth for your kind to experiment on me,” he tells them, using a move he copied from black widow to get the man on the floor.

After pinning him down, he raises his fist, and he punches over and over just enough to knock the man out. He’d be apologising if he wasn’t so scared. Fighting has never really been his ‘style’, so having to knock these people out makes some guilt bubble in his gut- but they’ve done far worse on him so maybe calling it even gives him a reason to do so.

As the three men lie on the floor, Peter reaches the top of the field and sees more people coming. Jumping over the smallest part of the fence, he lands by a road which luckily doesn’t have one car driving through it. He looks over, and sighs when the soldiers don’t stop coming. How does he escape this? Especially when they get a helicopter involved. It’s just the end of the road for him.

One last spurt of energy tells him to keep going. He turns and hits something hard, having no time to run. Squeezing his eyes shut, he doesn’t want to ever open them again. Who did he just fall into? Are they going to save him or help the others?

“Peter?” he hears, and oh god! It’s a familiar voice.

“Mr... Mr Rogers?” Peter asks, lighting up as soon as he sees the man.

He takes an offered hand, letting the man pull him to his feet. He feels safe- but that goes quickly as soon as he lets go. Apart from Tony (of course), Steve was Peter’s favourite Avenger. Kind, always there, and understanding of his anxiety, they barely spoke but every time they did he was attentive and said the right thing. Peter would be lying to say he wasn’t thrilled right now.

“Get behind me, son,” the captain says, giving Peter no time to have his inner crisis, raising his shield.

The way he fights is insane! Tossing the shield at one of the wings, the surveillance helicopter goes down and lands in the middle of the field. It explodes, knocking one third of the soldiers back (luckily, without harming any of them... which feels overly lucky on their side). The soldiers come up to Steve, and like a choreographed dance they go down one by one until the weakest run the other way.

“Peter,” Steve smiles, kneeling beside him. “You have no idea how much Tony has missed you.”

“...But he was working with Pierce, Mr Rogers. I saw it all.”

“Peter, Tony and Peirce were having an argument. Tony was seconds away from putting him in the ground for doing what he did to you. He only just found that fact out when you came into the room,” Steve explains, putting his hand on his shoulder (making Peter flinch. Steve was normally so good at remembering he didn’t like to be touched, but it’s been a week. He’d give the man the benefit of the doubt). “Do you really think he could do that to you?”

“Well, I mean- I didn’t... but it was right there in front of my eyes, and I didn’t know what to think, if I’m completely honest.”

Peter smiles to himself a little. Steve’s been there for him, right? He wouldn’t lie. Because if he had one more person tell him a lie, he was going to combust. And if Tony was disagreeing with Pierce all this time, then there was no betrayal at all, and his heart was still in the right place.

“Tony really isn’t working with them?”

“No!” Steve says, “He’d never do that, Pete. He hates that part of Shield anyway. He always has.”

“Oh, uh- well, does he want me back? I just- he might hate me now. What kind of ‘person’ runs away from a good, stable, home just because they see one conversation? He’ll think I’m stupid, and he probably hates me.”

“Woah, hold on!” Steve smiles, “It’s okay, he wants nothing more than for you to be home with us, Peter. He hasn’t stopped looking for you since you left. You could run away for three years, and he’d still welcome you back with open arms. It’s *all* he wants.”

Peter bites his lip nervously. Steve gets up, looking over his shoulder, “the cars over there, how about we go home?”

“Can I call him first? I don’t want this to be a surprise, Mr Rogers. He hates those.”

“Oh, yes. He does,” Steve mumbles to himself. The man fishes through his pocket to get his phone, shrugging when Peter looks expectedly at him. “Oh, great! There’s no service here. At all. We’ll have to wait until we get a bit closer.”

Peter hops into the car, smiling over at Steve as the man gets into the drivers seat. He’s never seen this car in the compound before, so it must be Steve’s personal one. They drive for about ten minutes, stopping off at this gas station when they could’ve been home by now. Peter didn’t exactly go far... right?

“Uh, Steve? Where are we going?”

“Just getting some gas,” the soldier smiles, “Why don’t you try to call Tony again?”

Peter does just that, grabbing the phone Steve puts in his hand. He types in Tony’s phone number, a phone number he remembers from the top of his head at this point. It rings. And it rings. And just as it goes to ring again, it stops, and he hears Tony’s breathing on the other side of the line.

“Is that you? Kid? Are you okay?”

“Yeah, Mr Stark, it’s me. And I’m okay. I promise.”

“Kid, where are you? I’ll come and get you now, okay? I’ll explain everything when you get here, I promise.”

“It’s okay. Mr Rogers is with me; he’s already explained what happened. And I’m so sorry for overreacting. It’s just- it hasn’t even been that long since it happened. Pierce was the worst man alive. The way he tortured me... it killed, and I was absolutely terrified that the one person I thought had my back could be working with him. But I should’ve known you never would’ve done that. It’s just not in your heart to do so.”

Tony’s quiet for a second. “...Did you say that Steve’s with you?”

“After my entire speech... that’s what you land on?” Peter huffs, “And I was being so sincere.”

“Peter, please. It’s important. Did you say that, right now, you’re with Steve Rogers?”

“Yes, Mr Stark! Why? Why is that so important?”

And then something happens that makes Peter as terrified as he was the moment the van pulled up. Because Tony doesn’t reply, but Steve Rogers himself does instead.

“I don’t think you are, Peter. Because I’m right here.”

“...What do you mean? You’re topping up on gas. I can see you!” Peter says, tugging at his seatbelt to get it un-done, but then only just realising it won’t undo. “Tony, I can’t move. I can’t do anything.”

“Alright, kid, okay. It’s going to be fine. What you need to do is activate tracking on that phone so I can follow wherever they take you. Do you know how to do that?”

Peter, all teary eyed and shaking, slides out of the phone app and into some settings that only he and Tony (and probably a lot of other people in the world) could understand. Tracking is activated and locked, before he returns to the call. Saying ‘I love you’ quickly into the phone as the other ‘Steve’ starts coming back, he hangs up and looks to the floor in shame.

‘Steve’ opens the door, prompting Peter to end the call quickly (there must be a reason for him to give him the phone. To tell him to call Tony... so, what was the big plan?) before the imposter finds out he knows what’s going on. He drops the phone on the floor, hoping fake Steve won’t realise it’s showing the Avengers their co-ordinates.

They drive for ages until Peter sees the outline of a big, grey, building shaped mostly like a warehouse. The moment Peter’s pushed in, he gets an eerie vibe. Fake Steve still hasn’t admitted to lying. And it’s then that Peter sees the collar around his neck. He breaks it in half, causing the man holding him to let go. Blinking back at Peter, ‘Steve’ turns into a skrull. He looks just like the skrulls his mama was friends with. All green, they look just like the typical envisioned look of an alien (and, really, where did people get that trope from? Hardly anyone from space was actually green. Peter especially, he only went green after one of May’s ‘dinners’). The skrull (surprising Peter that they were also on Earth) thanks him a thousand times and runs. It seems he was under mind control, and maybe if he’s lucky he’s gone straight for him.

“It’s not nice to let my subjects go, Parker,” Pierce says. He’s got a big bruise over his cheek, and Peter prides in the fact that was a gift from Tony. “I guess I’ll just have to swap their work onto you. Imagine what I could do with someone like you by my side and the ability to conquer space! I’d be all powerful.”

“You’re nothing but a stain compared to the power of the galaxy. They will laugh at your pathetic try, and you will become nothing but a laughingstock,” Peter says, trying his hardest to come up with something that will deter the man from his mission. “There’s no way I will have enough power to take on anything out here by myself, never mind on planets which are simply more advanced than Earth.”

“And that’s why I have others, Peter. Those skrulls are only some of my alien collections,” Pierce grins, rubbing his hands together. “You would’ve been in the same place if I wasn’t so interested in how you got here. Most of these aliens found their way down for a visit or came in on a ship they made themselves. But you? Your mother sent you here, and I intend on coming back with you. Imagine the power in my hands.”

“You’re a maniac!” Peter says, trying to wiggle out of the bounds he’s in.

“I’m innovative, Parker. Nobody else has the strengths to find your kind, and more. I do, and that’s why I deserve the universe. I need you to find out how to get there. All I want is power, Peter, it’s not too much to ask. And if you don’t give show me how, I’ll find out myself... just like before.”

*Tony*



The moment he found out it was Peter calling, they tracked his phone for as far as it would go. The car is abandoned far from where any life is once the Avengers make their way down to the signal. Tony flies around the space, Thor too, as the land team try to get something out of this area. They must be close... he must be.

Tony sees the big, grey, building and notices it's a random place to be. Flying in close, the armoured man stares down and asks Friday to tell her if there's anyone inside. She announces there are around thirty, and that Peter is one of them. It's more than he ever thought there would be, and it makes him shudder that Pierce can convince so many to act as they did. What reason they have, it doesn't matter. Peter deserves to be free, and this isn't it.

Knocking on the door of the warehouse, they wait for a while and then they knock again for good measure. Tony can't wait until the door opens, but he's stopped by Steve just in case 'they got the wrong house' (what other house would be suitable for a kidnapping? It's obvious, he thinks, Friday literally just told him he was in there. But, according to Steve, technology goes wrong, and they can't depend on the best AI ever made... not that he's being biased). Tony can't wait to hug Peter, knock Pierce out for putting him in a situation like this, and talk with Peter until forever to sort everything out between them. To let him know he can still trust him, that he can love humanity even if the minority can be so horrible.

But with the foreboding threat of Pierce trying to make himself all-powerful, they'll have little time to enjoy their fist interaction since the kid ran away. So, with the team right behind him, Tony thinks he's waited long enough for the door to swing open... so he hits it with a laser beam, and it all goes down.

Now to just find his kid.

# The End Of One Story Starts Another

## Chapter Notes

TW- gun violence

It's late at night (well, he thinks) when Peter hears unfamiliar movement outside the room he's been thrown into. Moving about in the cuffs, Peter looks up the door, and groans. It hurts as the metal tugs at his wrists, and there's no point in fighting anymore. He's exhausted.

But then the noise he hears is something that maybe he has heard before, from the day he was rescued in the first place. And a light bulb is suddenly above his head, and he thinks that perhaps Tony's already found him, and tracking the phone worked. There's less fear, less exhaustion, and Peter's over the moon and regretful that he ever left.

"Tony?" he whines.

The door opens, Peter smiles, but then he sees a worried looking Pierce is staring down at him with a gun in his hand. He looks tired, hair tussled and blood on his arm... he's clearly been fighting for his life. For all Peter knew, there were thousands of others like him on this man's command, and perhaps Tony had let more than just him roam free.

"You've lost," Peter sneers, "Tony's won, he's come for me, and he's beat you. What are you going to do now? Shoot Iron Man with a handgun? Pierce it's over, just give yourself in and maybe the people in the world will prove themselves a thousand times more merciful than you ever were."

"I haven't lost yet, Peter," he says, walking over. He grabs the side of the cuffs that's attached to the pole in the middle of the room and unlocks it. But he keeps control, handcuffing himself to Peter. He presses the gun against the temple of the young boy's head. "I've won. I have you, Peter, and soon you'll see what a man does when another puts their son at risk. People are like that. They're a disease. Sacrificing hundreds, even thousands, just to keep that one safe. We're selfish. We're horrible. We take and we kill, and we're good at it. We win."

Peter squeezes his eyes shut, trying his hardest to ignore the feeling of the weapon as Pierce pushes it in, further and further. He can feel the pressure, and with one push of the trigger it'll all be over, and Tony will have nothing left to find. "Please," the young boy whispers, "all I want to do is go home. My home- far away from this place."

"Oh, Peter, that's all I want as well. I want us to go to together. I want to make sure I see the beauties that all the aliens over the years told me about," Pierce says, walking slowly down the emptied, dark, hallway. Peter can barely see the light at the end of the long stretch, and if that isn't symbolic of anything then he doesn't know what is. "So, are you going to show me how?"

"I don't know," Peter says, truthfully. He tears up, hand shaking. He's only a kid, a kid who was forced into an unknown planet after every being of his species passed away in front of his eyes. He's scared, lonely, and all he wanted was some security, and the closeness of the few people he learnt to love, but instead he's subjected to torture with every route he's taken on Earth. All for the benefit of them, when they give him nothing at all. "Please," Peter begs, "I really don't know."

“Of course, you do! Peter, be honest with me,” Pierce snaps. “You’re not telling me the truth.”

“I am!”

“Peter...”

“I am, please. I swear. I am,” Peter begs, as they get out into the back of the building.

Sunlight hits his eyes through the one window, and he winces, and he can’t see Tony anywhere. Where’s Tony? He can save him. He really can! He’s done it before, so where is he now? It’s all Peter wants, all he needs, now that he feels like this is the end for him. He’s crying, tears falling down his face at such a speed that he could’ve sworn it was raining. A fast-flowing stream, and at the end of it there’s no flowers, or cute little animals desperate for a drink. No, it’s only destruction, pain. Humanities greatest creation... suffering.

Just as Pierce loses his patience, Tony walks around the corner with the entire team at his heels. He sees Peter first, and his faceplate lifts as he smiles. But then his eyes dart to the gun, and to Pierce, and the situation is suddenly a lot more tense, and Peter’s terrified.

“Pierce?” Tony asks, softly. “Please. Put the gun down.”

“You don’t understand, Tony. I was close. So close. I could’ve done it, and I would’ve succeeded if you never found this little brat. Is he really worth all of this Tony? Forget the ‘space race’ to small, uninhabitable planets such as Mars, America could be the first country to go beyond our *galaxy*. We’d be heroes, more than you are now. I don’t understand how a genius like yourself doesn’t want this?”

“Yes, he’s worth this. All of it, Pierce. Plus, he doesn’t even know how to get home himself,” Tony explains, trying to calm the situation as if he was a negotiator. “You just need to let him go, and maybe the punishment for entrapping all those aliens will be lessened.”

“You think that this was my only collection?” Pierce scoffs, “I’ll always be one step ahead of you. And I’m keeping Peter. He’s the closest I have ever got to the truth.”

“I’m not going to let you do that.”

Peter locks eyes with Tony, looking as scared as the day they met. Tony mouths ‘it’ll be okay’ and Peter’s worried that he’s so quick to believe him. Tony’s warmth, Pierce the opposite, and he’s stuck between the two. It feels like limbo, like he’s going to be here forever until the cosmic powers decide his fate. Will he be welcomed home into Tony’s arms? Or will be whisked away once more to be Pierce’s puppet?

“If you try to stop me, I shoot him.”

“No, you won’t,” Tony says.

“And how are you so sure?”

“Because you said it yourself, Pierce. He’s your ‘only shot’, so why would you kill him? It doesn’t make sense. You’re not going to trick me into just letting him you take him,” Tony tells him, “but thank for being so damn egotistical. Talking for this long really helped our plan.”

Pierce’s face dropped. “What?”

But before anyone could answer, before even Peter could understand what was happening, Captain

America's shield went into the back of the villain's head. The man went tumbling to the floor, taking Peter down with him. However, before Peter's head hit the carpet he was saved by his biggest hero. Looking only at Tony as Natasha grabs the key to the cuffs and separates him from Pierce, Peter starts sobbing as he throws his, now free, arms around Tony's shoulders.

Burying his face into the side of Tony's neck, he cries harshly as Tony rubs a comforting circle into his lower back. Tony rests his head against Peter's, "hey, bambino, it's okay. It's all alright. You're here now, it's okay. I've got you. I love you."

"I want to get out of here, get me out of here. Please, Tony. I want to leave."

Hearing those words, Tony made sure Peter was tight against him before he immediately got out of the dingy, old, and frankly scary warehouse. He flew to the nearest building he could find, setting the young boy down on the roof. Getting out of his armour, he joins Peter and takes his hand.

"I'm so sorry this happened to you again, Pete," he says, sighing. "I won't be mad if you want to go far away from this place. I'll get the world's smartest people together and we'll figure something out."

"I don't want to think about it right now, Mr Stark," Peter whispers. "I just want- I want to stay with you, and I want to watch them put Pierce away, and-and I want to see May and my friends again. I just want everything to go back to normal."

"Well then, bud. That's exactly what we'll do."

*A few days later with May Parker*

May is sat on her porch, cocktail in her hand as these days there's nobody around to tell her no. She's staring out to the garden, which is now overfull with weeds, but one thing remains the same. Right by where the wood of the porch ends, there's a giant hole where Peter first landed when he was just a little kid, before something happened to him- when he disappeared months ago.

There are flowers on her table from her neighbours, all of which were given when they found out her husband was killed in action. She takes a deep breath, putting the glass by her side as she wipes one tear away from her cheeks with her other hand brushing through her long, brown, hair. She takes her glasses from their case, putting them over her eyes as she takes out the weekly newspaper to see if there's any news on missing teenagers. If the local police can't find him, she will.

But just as she gets reading, she hears an engine revving outside. She ignores it at first, but it gets louder. Now, knowing she lives in a quiet, undisturbed, neighbourhood, she realises that maybe there's something going on outside. So, she steps up and walks out of her garden's gate to see the havoc. A few neighbours have also stepped outside, and a few of them have their hands over their mouths in shocks. But what are they looking at?

And that's when May sees the car.

Leaning on the side of the car is Tony Stark, and the person holding onto the man's hand is... Peter?!

"Pete?" May says, eyes wide, "is... is that really you?"

Peter's smile is beautiful, reaching to the side of his eyes. And although Ben was never his biological dad, it looks just like he's come back to her. May rushes towards them, apologetically pushing Tony out of the way as she grabs Peter and pulls him into a hug. She kisses him on his forehead, and then on his cheek and the other and all over his face until he's laughing and

groaning.

She leans back, moving her hands to his cheeks. “Oh, darling. Look at you. Have you put some muscle on?” she laughs, ruffling his hair. “Oh, that’s definitely got longer.” When he makes a face at her, his face scrunching up as he struggles to keep the tears in, she sighs softly and smiles gently at him. “It’s a good look, you look handsome. You look just like Ben, honey.”

“It was my fault, May. It was all my fault,” he whispers.

May shakes her head, pulling him back into a hug. She sways back and forth, holding like old times as she squeezes her own eyes shut. “Don’t ever say that, baby,” she whispers softly. “It wasn’t your fault. None of it was.”

“H-how do you know that?”

“Because I know my boy, Pete. I know how kind-hearted he is, and how lovely he is. I know he’s the best kid I’ve ever met, and that all Ben wanted was him to be safe. Him going after you was a way of showing how much he loved you, honey. It’s not your fault that people came after you,” May tells him. She steps back, holding his hand, as she finally glances over at Tony. “And what a fancy car you came home in, hm?”

“It’s got heated seats,” Peter smiles, using his free hand to grab Tony’s. He pulls the man over to where the two of them are stood, looking up at him with pride. “This is Tony, May. He saved my life.”

May, of course, knew exactly who the man was, but she smiles and introduces himself anyway. “May Parker,” she says, “I imagine you’re quite used to people thanking you, but I cannot express my gratitude that you brought my baby home.”

Tony tightly smiles, as if he’s hesitant to leave Peter here. He doesn’t want to say goodbye. Before he even says anything, May looks at him knowingly.

“You’ve been with him for a while,” May says.

“I’m sorry, May, it was my fault, I asked him not to take me home as I was scared that they’d come after yo-,”

“I’m not mad at either of you,” May chuckles. She looks at Tony, “he’s brilliant, isn’t he? He just worms his way into your heart, and you can’t get him out. You don’t want to say goodbye. But can I just say… we’ve got an empty room. And I’m sure you do in that big, big, house of yours.”

“I do,” Tony nods, a chuckle escaping his mouth.

“There we go,” May smiles. “I guess we’re co-parents then, hm?”

*Tony Stark*

Driving home, Tony consistently looks over to the passenger seat which is now empty. He left Peter behind at his house, and his heart feels like a black hole. He knows he’ll see him soon, and to be honest they’ve already planned a visit. And they’ve said that when the kid’s back at school and settled that they’ll have lab days every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. So, it’s not like they’ll never see each other again. But when you go from seeing someone every day to sporadically, it’s a change in routine, and it really makes Tony realise how much the kid means to him.

Co-parenting is hard.

When he gets back to the compound, his first port of call is to research how many sites Pierce had. There could be thousands of other aliens in need of assistance, stuck in small cells and scared out their minds just as Pete was. They could be younger, older, or even the same age, and it makes Tony sick to his stomach.

But nothing comes up.

Frustrated, he turns and works on his armour instead. Updating, adding new features, and polishing old ones, Tony looks over at DUM-E and smiles softly. He's back to old habits, and he figures Peter will be too. He hopes the kid's happy now and knows that if he's back with May... surely, he's staying around for good.

Just as he's working on some coding, his phone buzzes on the table. Grabbing it, his heart flips upside down when he sees just who's calling him.

"Hey, kid. What's up?" he answers, tilting his head when he sees Peter with a young boy he doesn't recognise.

"Hey, Mr Stark! Look who's already at my house!" Peter says, face too close to the camera. Tony must look confused, as Peter just chuckles and says the answer for him. "It's Ned! MJ is here too, but she's too busy catching up with May. I swear she likes my aunt better than me, and she's meant to be one of my best friends."

"Hey," Ned says, "I'm your best friend. I even set up a mural for you when the whole school thought you died. I totally knew you were still kicking, by the way. I could sense it. There was no way my best friend was leaving me behind, you know? But when he said he was staying with a 'Mr Stark', I was like- what?!" he says, grabbing the camera and pulling an over-exaggerated surprised face. When he's done, the camera pans back around to Peter who's laughing as Ned continues to talk. "I was totally shocked. Peter has told me bits- like I know he's an alien now, which, by the way, I totally knew before. I've got like extra-terrestrial x-ray goggles, and I saw right through the façade."

Tony laughs. No wonder these two are best friends, they're exactly alike. "I bet you did, Ned."

"Woah, this is so cool. I'm talking to *Tony Stark*, right now. Like- this is me, Ned Leeds, talking to Iron Man! You wait until I tell my mom about this, she's gonna flip! You totally saved her in the New York attacks in 2012. She's like your biggest fan ever."

"That's just what I do," Tony winks. "Now, do you boys want to see the new armour?"

"Yes!" both say simultaneously.

As they fawn over his creation, he thinks of Pepper... hm, maybe he really does want to start a family. Well, more like expand the one they've already made. Peter would be the best big brother, and Ned would be a funny big brother's best friend. After a few hours of chit-chat over the phone, Tony tells the kids that it's time to go to bed, and as May walks into the kid's room that they're having a sleepover in, looking as if she hasn't slept, she shares the same sentiment (and Tony can't help but laugh as he sees a young girl looking just as frustrated as May... ah, so that must be MJ).

When the facetime ends, Tony rests the phone on top of his chest and looks up at the ceiling with a fond smile stuck to his face. He can't help it- he just loves this kid so much.

*Peter, a month later*

Settled back into school, Peter's beginning to enjoy everyday life again. He's in band, academic

decathlon, and right back at the top of his class like he should be. He's going to Tony's every Tuesday and Thursday like they had planned, and he's overjoyed that he can experience life without the fear that some manic is going to try and kidnap him once more. Because if they do, they've got Tony Stark to deal with.

It's a normal lunch time when Peter makes a decision that changes his life.

Everyone is talking about some 'Avenger's level threat' as soon as they're let out for lunch. And when Ned shows him the footage of the team fighting Crossfire (apparently a villain that's been a thorn in Clint's side for a while now) over an evacuated city, he realised he had un-tapped potential in him that he could use to help the humans. Instead of fearing them and leaving them to hurt each other, he could be a superhero just like Tony was.

So, that night, he picks up sewing... and May never has to know the reason why.

The first few patrols are so good that Peter's on the highs of life. He feels helpful, powerful, and like this was the reason why his mama sent him here. To be their hero... it's his calling! Obviously, he gets a few hits that he can't hide from Tony, but he blames them on falling down the stairs at school which, weirdly enough, Tony seems to accept.

Soon enough, 'Spiderman' is a household name, and either Tony's forgotten what his powers are like, or he doesn't care enough to ask... but the adults, and everyone else, in his life haven't caught on yet. And when Spiderman finds a base, and a bunch of aliens like himself inside it, he's ecstatic. Making his final plan to find all these bases and to free thousands, he puts himself on Tony's radar... again, but for a completely different reason.

They meet after Peter got to his fifth base, freeing everyone inside it. And as he sits on the roof of it, eating a celebratory hoagie, his eyes go wide as the Avengers come running to the doors. They haven't seen him yet, and he can barely make out what they're saying to each other, but he tries to listen nonetheless.

"Do you reckon that 'Spiderman' beat us again?" Clint says, looking over at Tony who's holding his mask underneath his armpit like it's a motorcycle helmet. When Tony huffs, he laughs. "I'll take that as a yes."

"How does he even know about this? Do you reckon he's working for Fury?"

"Fury no longer works for anyone himself, Tony. Did you not read the email? After everyone found out about Pierce, more secrets were uncovered. Turns out Hydra was hiding underneath all the cracks too," Steve explains.

Tony blinks. "Oh," he says. "You know that I don't read emails. It's- well, it's ancient. Just send a text message."

"Back in my day we had to rely on--"

"Carrier pigeons, I know," Tony interrupts.

"I was going to say telegraphs," Steve mutters.

"Well, if all of you would just turn your heads up to the roof then you'd have your answer," Natasha rolls her eyes. She smiles softly at him, and part of Peter figures she's already caught on. "Are you going to come down?" she shouts.

Peter does as he's told, shoving the hoagie down his mouth, and finishing it before he swings

down to meet them all. “Hey,” he smiles. “Nice to meet you all. Spiderman, at your service,” he tells them, saluting.

“...Am I talking to a twelve-year-old?” Tony asks, glaring a little at the mask.

“Hm, no,” Natasha replies. “He’s at least fourteen,” she adds, before secretly winking at Peter. Oh, she definitely knows... right?”

“How did you know about these bases?” Tony asks, straight to the point.

“I have twitter, and it was a trending topic when you got to one the other day.”

“Oh,” Tony mumbles. “Well, keep doing it. I guess. I mean, you’re obviously talented at finding them. And I’m not about to stop you from doing my job. Just... be good to them, okay? The first one had my kid in it, and I love him. If they’re anything like him, they’re perfect.”

Peter blushes, “well, he loves you too,” he mumbles, before swinging away quickly before Tony could digest his words.

“...What?”

Coming from the stars, Peter’s more human than the people that tried to take him. He starts to love the people he lives amongst, wanting nothing more to see everyone happy and safe. And he does that perfectly as a superhero just like ‘Mr Stark’ does, and as the nicest person around like ‘May Parker’.

He’s got amazing friends, an amazing family, and he’s happier now than he’s ever been. He might miss the people he left behind on the planet in which he was born, but now, as he sits on top of a roof with a mask over his face that’s only lifted a bit for yet another hoagie, he realises that this is home. There’s nothing else to go back to, there’s no rocket he needs to build, because here, amongst these strange, complicated, yet loving people... he’s right where he needs to be.

Humans come in a range of different ‘shells.’ They’re flawed, mean, harsh, and even evil, but, on the other hand, they’re kind, loving, forgiving and they’ll do anything just for the sake of others. Humans are so diverse, and so different, and Peter loves getting to know each and everyone he comes across. He has his favourites, of course, but when there’s nothing to do with Spiderman... his favourite pastime is to sit and watch the world go by. He’ll watch a couple of his age experience love for the first time, and just beside them are an old couple that are experiencing it for the thousandth. But you can see in the depths of their eyes that, to them, nothing has changed since the day they were the teen’s age. Because love is so strong, built to defeat any evil- and Peter feels privileged to have it everywhere in his life. Yeah, there’s no way he’s leaving this planet... plus, he’s still got a job to do.

Deep in rural USA, there’s a small village of only fifty houses. They live close to the sea, and the only exciting thing that has happened to them before is when a child flew from the sky, met Tony Stark, and started to save the world as Spiderman. But, other than that, it was a completely ordinary village and a long story which has a happy ending.

Well, until the other planets start to threaten them... (and Tony figures out who’s behind the mask) but that’s for another day.

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